# QUESTIONS

TO PRIEST

# DANIEL SYSOEV

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On our spiritual journey, how often do we find ourselves in need of a timely answer to this or that question that is troubling our soul. We believe that if we pray to God before asking advice from a priest, the Lord will give us the right answer by way of His servant. This is always a source of comfort and strengthening on our path to eternity. This book is comprised of answers to questions posed to Father Daniel during talks devoted to the explanation of the Bible. Father Daniel gives clear, logical answers to questions of a most interesting and vital nature.

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### 1. Is God omniscient?

In the book of Genesis it says: *I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know* **(Gen. 18:21)**. Why does God go down to see? He is omniscient, is He not? The Lord is truly omniscient, but in His justice He restricts His omniscience. The Lord went down to see so that no one would be able to say He condemned the sodomites without examination, without a trial, without an investigative experiment. This is the very reason why the book of Genesis says this here.

### 2. What is the rite of repentance to the Royal Martyrs?

Among the Orthodox there are some who are creating a rite of repentance to the Royal Martyrs. Allegedly, whoever takes part in this rite will bypass the tollhouses after death. Is this correct? The ones who will bypass the tollhouses are those who have lived in accordance with the Lord's commandments or who have died after worthily receiving Holy Communion. Such a person remains free from any sort of attack, as we hear in Psalm 90. All rites of repentance are forbidden by the Patriarch, and those who participate in them are acting unlawfully. Currently they are composing a rite of repentance to the Royal Martyrs on behalf of the Russian people; but the fact is that the Bible has established that *Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy*

*sight* **(Ps. 51:4)**. To whom was this said? To God. Man sins before God, not before man; and repentance is a personal confession of one's sins, and not some set of actions—what is more, actions forbidden by the Patriarch. Do not take part in such things.

### 3. Will unbaptized infants go to hell?

What is hell? The word "hell" has two meanings. The first is that hell is a place of hopelessness and a place of darkness, but not of punishment. This is how it was in ancient times in the Old Testament, when people were in darkness and did not see God, but were not subjected to punishment. The second meaning is hell in the sense of punishment: the very same fiery gehenna spoken of by Scripture. We need to differentiate between these things. An unbaptized infant cannot enter the kingdom of God because he is unbaptized, because he does not have "eyes" with which to see God's kingdom; he has not been born for the kingdom. Moreover, he still has ancestral sin within him, which is frightening. What is ancestral sin? In the heart of every unbaptized person there lives an evil spirit that is cast out before baptism. It is cooperation with this evil spirit that gives rise to constant evil in man's heart. The stream of evil thoughts and evil desires comes from one of the devil's evil spirits that dwells in the heart of a person who is not baptized. This demon influences us as well, but from the outside, while it influences the unbaptized from the inside, like

an internal force, as it were. This same type of evil spirit lives in the heart of every infant, and it is this evil force that hinders him from entering the kingdom of heaven. However, since the infant himself did nothing deserving of punishment, having done nothing wicked, he is not subjected to punishment. God shows him as much mercy, as St. Gregory the Theologian says, as he is able to receive, not having been reborn. He is not able to enter the kingdom: he is blind, he cannot see anything; but to the extent that he is able to feel God's touch, God's mercy, he will feel it. He will not enter the kingdom of God, however, because of ancestral sin; for *I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me* **(Ps. 51:5).** This iniquitous sin that dwells in the heart of man, this terrible disease of death, hinders an infant from entering the kingdom of God.

This is the very reason why abortions are so terrible; they are more terrible than murdering an adult. You and I know about what I have just said; however, Scripture is silent concerning what comes after. This is why Christians must fight relentlessly against abortion. The soul enters to dwell at the moment of conception; therefore, from the moment of conception an infant is a complete person. The Church forbids hormonal contraception because in 60% of cases, hormonal contraception leads to the rejection of an already fertilized egg; that is, it leads to murder. In dire situations it is the duty of any Christian to baptize the infant; not just an infant, incidentally, but an adult as well. If there is a threat of death, any person, if it is impossible to wait or to go to the priest, ought

to baptize any person. Therefore, every Christian should know the baptismal formula. It goes like this: "The servant of God (name) is baptized in the name of the Father. Amen (the person is immersed in the water). And of the Son. Amen (we immerse the person a second time). And of the Holy Spirit. Amen (we immerse the person a third time)." Any water may be used—be it even a little.

**4. What response can we give to skeptics?**

When skeptics say, "You Orthodox have a hard life. Nothing is allowed—you can't eat what you want, or anything," you should say, "Try it, and you'll see how wonderful it is. For us, the more difficulties we have, the closer God is. We need all these difficulties. As our stomachs shrink our pockets expand."

**5. In what language was the first epistle to the Corinthians written? What is the exact translation of the word "love" in chapter 13 of that epistle (1 Cor. 13:1-13)?**

Would it be correct to translate the word "love" as "compassion"? This is the translation given in many French versions. The word "love" in Greek (and I Corinthians was written in Greek) is "agape." "Agape" is translated specifically as "love," and to translate it as "compassion" is inaccurate; it would distinctly lessen its meaning. For when we say that God loves His Son, or that the Son loves His Father, this

does not mean that the Son pities God the Father. Compassion is one of the parts of divine love, which is more than compassion, naturally.

### 6. What is evil?

Certain theologians consider evil or the devil to be the absence of good, like darkness in the absence of light; while others ascribe a creative nature to this evil force. What answer can we give on the basis of Holy Scripture? It is very simple. Evil, of course, does not have an essence. An essence is not something evil possesses. Sin is the misuse of good qualities; it does not possess its own substance. The devil, however, possesses his own power. He is the rebellious chief angel; therefore, he exists; but as far as his essence, the devil is not evil itself. He distorted his essence; he simply disfigured it. Within this context, evil is nothing. Evil is a certain type of action, but not an entity. Therefore, to say that evil exists would be incorrect. However, evil does have the ability to be active, because there are creatures that spread evil, who willingly activate it.

### 7. What is the meaning of the Savior's words: "shake off the dust of your feet"?

*And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet* **(Mt. 10:14)**. It says here explicitly: shake the dirt off

your feet. Say, "We don't wish to take anything, not even the mud, not even your dirt." If people reject God's call, if people refuse to listen to God, then this dirt is left as a testimony against them. Why dirt specifically? Why does the Lord say that the dirt needs to be shaken off? This is a reference to words from the book of the prophet Moses. God says through Moses: *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you* **(Deut. 30:19)**. The earth will stand as a witness for you or against you, according to whether you obey My commands or not.

### 8. What sorts of miracles were there during the persecutions of the Church in the 20th century?

During the persecutions of the Christians in the first centuries, the Lord performed miracles, which strengthened the martyrs and confirmed the unbelievers, strengthening their faith. During the persecutions in the 20th century, were there similar miracles for the conversion of the atheists? Naturally, there were many such occurrences: for instance, icons and even cupolas miraculously restoring themselves. There have been instances where atheists have torn the gold from cupolas, and then a cloud descended on the cupolas, covering them with gold; and icons have been restored in the same way. These were the kinds of undisguised miracles, healings, and signs that the Lord manifested. There were a great many signs of God's wrath: cases where people who opposed God fell down dead. Today I was told a story about

a certain woman who had three children, all of them deaf. She went to the elders at the Lavra (this was in the 50's) and asked, "Why are all three of my children deaf?" The elder asked her, "Do you know what your husband has been doing?" "Yes," she replied. The elder responded, "Well then, why are you asking me this?" Her husband had torn down cupolas. The elder went on, "He did not want Russia to hear bells; he wanted Russia to be deaf. How are you going to have children who can hear?" In this case the children are not to blame; for them this is a cross, just like any suffering given for the correction of life. For the parents, however, it is a punishment.

### 9. How is faith different from hope?

Faith is belief in the existence of God the Creator and in His Word, the acceptance of His Revelation. Faith is trust in God. Hope is having hope that God will do something for you in the future. Faith concerns the present or the past. It can concern the future as well, but primarily it has to do with the present and the past. Hope, though, concerns the future. Hope is the offspring of faith.

### 10. Why did God allow revolution and war in Russia?

After all, in spite of these tribulations there are few believers in Russia, just as before. It is sometimes said that faith was strengthened, but how is this evident? The Lord

sends tribulations as punishment for certain acts of wickedness: when people trample on justice, when they go against the commandments. The Lord does not just send them arbitrarily; the tribulations are caused specifically by this. But the Lord, naturally, wanted to pull many people out of sin; and those people whom He wanted to pull out, He pulled out. These are the new martyrs, many of whom were not righteous people before the Revolution, but who repented because of it. Conversely, there were many who concealed their piety, and their piety was made known during these tribulations—during the revolution and the Second World War. The Second World War lead to the repentance of massive numbers of people of that generation. The Lord allowed these tribulations for their sake. Today for our sake the Lord has given us freedom; we are not accountable for all generations: we are accountable for ourselves, for our own generation, for our own selves. If we choose not to correct ourselves, nothing good will come of it. The Lord was once asked, *Lord, are there few that be saved?* **(Lk. 13:23)**. He did not name the quantity, but said, *Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able* **(Lk. 13:24)**. Thus, questions of this nature are pointless: it is not our business to know the seasons that the Heavenly Father has set by His own authority. Our business is to know ourselves how to work toward salvation. The Lord has given us the opportunity to study the Holy Scriptures, to keep the commandments, to go to church freely. The Lord has given us this opportunity, and we must make use of it.

We do not know how much time we are going to be given. Who said that we would have a lot of time? The Lord loves His Church; therefore, He does not leave Her undisturbed for long. For, as St. John Chrysostom has said, there is no worse enemy for the Church than a time of calmness. In calm times, as Scripture says, people grow fat and heavy and turn away from their Creator: *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation* **(Deut. 32:15).**

## 11. Do the unbaptized have a guardian angel?

In the book of Job it says: *If there be for him* (for the sinner whom God has punished by means of an illness) *an angel, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him, and he is merciful to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom; let his flesh become fresh with youth; let him return to the days of his youthful vigor'; then man prays to God, and He accepts him; He sees his face with a shout of joy, and He restores to man his righteousness. He sings before men and says: 'I sinned and perverted what was right, and it was not repaid to me. He has redeemed my soul from going down into the pit, and my life shall look upon the light.' Behold, God does all these things, twice, three times, with a man, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be lighted with the light of life* **(Job 33:23-30).** Even in the Old Testament the ratio was one guardian angel to

a thousand sinners. What the ratio is today we do not know. In the baptismal service there is a special petition asking God to give the person a guardian angel. Thus, we know that a guardian angel is given to every person at baptism. This is how the baptized differ from the unbaptized in this regard. However, there are cases when God will send a guardian angel to an unbaptized person specially, to perform some particular task. Such things happen in cases where God has appointed a person as a leader, as some sort of ruler. Likewise, God sends angels to rulers in order to manifest His will through them. For instance, God worked in this way through Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Balaam. The purpose of this is to save the person himself, if it is possible, if he wants it; and if he does not, then to have His will done through him for the salvation of others.

### 12. What is the difference between pride and arrogance?

Pride and arrogance are synonyms indicating different degrees of this passion. Arrogance is pride that has become habitual.

### 13. Is post-mortem anatomy dissection of a human being a sin?

No, it is not a sin if it was done out of necessity. For example, it is certainly not sinful when it is necessary in order to discover the cause of a person's death, just as it is not sin-

ful for students who are studying the structure of the human body, because a student needs to have knowledge of what he is healing. For example, St. Luke (Voino-Yasenetsky) was a surgeon and, naturally, performed dissections: it was necessary for the development and improvement of medicine so as to properly aid the suffering. In his lifetime he performed a great many operations that saved the lives of a large number of people.

### 14. Is it not a sin to make money on the stock exchange?

What does sin mean in this instance? The change in worth of some securities is not sinful. If a person buys shares, he is investing in the work of a company. The same is true of derivative financial instruments for assets backed by actual funds. But to use huge amounts of capital with the aim of creating panic and a corresponding feeling on the trading platform, to collapse the markets for the sake of one's greed—this is certainly a sin, and is punishable by law.

### 15. What is your opinion on so-called sanogenic thought?

Its founder was Professor Orlov. There are currently some among the Orthodox who are fascinated by it. They study the pattern of precise thought and the stimulus of sanogenic activity in order to work out their complexes.

Unfortunately, I do not know anything about these works of the professor's. There is a multitude of this sort of psychological theory. What I do know is that the only means of being healed from sin lies within the Church. This means is the struggle against the passions with the aid of God's grace and the Holy Mysteries. These techniques have been brilliantly laid out for us in John Climacus' *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* and Theophan the Recluse's *The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It*, and in other outstanding works. They are briefly described in the Catechism. And besides this means, there is no real healing, and none is possible.

I could tell you something about the correction of the sin of alcoholism. There are a multitude of different techniques. For instance, there is Alcoholics Anonymous, a system for curing drunkenness. There are other methods: hypnosis, psychotherapy, etc., but none of these means, as it turns out, yields good results. The best program, Alcoholics Anonymous, is said to have a success rate of 7%. That being said, when the question is of perfectly simple, regular things—namely, being healed by means of the Church—and a person begins to confess, commune, and to struggle against his sins, using the methods that the Church offers, then such a person is practically always healed. This is a perfect response to questions regarding success rates.

It is nonsense when people say that the Church's methods do not work, because a passion is a habit, a habit of the

heart that cannot be healed by medicine, hypnosis, or anything else. If a person outside the Church were to be placed in solitary confinement, he could be completely cured of his alcoholism; it is guaranteed that he will not be an alcoholic then. But in reality, we cannot correct a habit other than by God's intervention and the Church's methods for fighting against the passions, and we should not try to fool ourselves. A great many theories will spring up, however. They are impossible to keep track of: they spring up like mushrooms after a rain, but then they burst. As Basil the Great said, "We should not get involved in scientific disputes." If a scientific theory appeared which contradicted the Church's teachings, he would say: "Well, what of it? Wait a year, and it will burst before your eyes."

### 16. What is the correct way to read the Psalter for the living and the departed?

After the first stasis the prayer for the living is read; after the second, the prayer for the departed. After the third stasis the prayer at the end of the kathisma is read.

### 17. How should one struggle against doubts about the faith?

There are two types of doubt about the faith: the first is tied to ignorance, and the second, to the devil's influence. When a person has doubts about the faith due to his

lack of knowledge of the faith, then he needs to study the faith more. For instance, a person may think that we worship three gods; he is being tormented by doubts about the Trinitarian dogma. What we need to know here is that we believe in God, His Word, and His Spirit. We believe in the Son, ever-existent in the Father; in the Father, radiant in glory; and in the Holy Spirit Who proceeds eternally from the Father in the form of the One God, but not three Gods. It is simply a matter of clarification. Or, for instance, when they say that the Incarnation of God is impossible because two persons cannot become one person. We should explain that there is only one person: the person of God the Son, Who took upon Himself human nature and yet remained God.

It is another matter when doubts arise that are not logical, but irrational, and a person says that he does not believe, no matter what. This is purely the devil's influence. We should fight against it in the following way: if a person has doubts about God or about there being a Savior, he must read the Symbol of Faith. If a person has doubts about Holy Communion, then he must read "I believe, O Lord, and I confess that Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the Living God." If a person has doubts about the most pure Theotokos, then he must pray to her. If he has doubts about some saint or another, then he should pray to that saint. A confession of faith dispels every kind of delusion. This is the medicine for doubts.

### 18. How often may pregnant women commune?

Pregnant women should commune as often as possible. No less than once a month and no more than once a day. But usually women who are pregnant try to commune once a week; this is a good practice and a beneficial one.

### 19. Was the Theotokos actually taken up to heaven along with her body, and when did this occur?

The most pure Theotokos died and her soul was parted from her body; but on the third day the Lord resurrected her by His divine power. Thus, she is already forever united with her body. She is first among the saved, first among the justified, and acheived theosis. And this is the reason why the feast of the Dormition is connected with the end of the world. At the Liturgy for the feast of the Dormition we say that "all the apostles are on the clouds of heaven." What does this tell us? That all Christians will be carried on heavenly clouds to meet Christ the Savior.

### 20. What do "choir of the Cherubim" and "mystically represent" mean?

Translated, the text is as follows: "We, mystically representing the cherubim and singing a thrice-holy hymn to the Life-creating Trinity, will now lay aside every earthly care in order to receive the King of all, Him Whom the angels

surround with spears, like an emperor, singing the hymn: Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia." This is the meaning of the Cherubic Hymn. "We praise the invisible cherubim upon whom God rests."

### 21. How is one to do good works in God's name?

First of all, while doing good works we need to say "I'm doing this for the Lord." As we Orthodox Christians say, "for the glory of God." This is not a saying: it is the absolute truth. For the glory of whom? For the glory of God. We need to understand what this is all about.

Secondly, we need to do them in accordance with God's will; that is, do those works attested to by Holy Scripture.

Thirdly, we need to do them by God's strength, receiving this strength through Holy Communion and the other holy sacraments, and have our works be accompanied by God's glory. This means that we must tell ourselves, "We worthless servants did only what we were supposed to do." This is what it means to do good works in the Lord's name. And, naturally, everything must be accompanied by prayer.

### 22. How long does one have to seek God?

A person who seeks God finds Him immediately. As it is said, he who seeks wisdom—and wisdom is Jesus Christ Himself—will not have trouble finding it, because he will

find it standing right before his door. The problem lies elsewhere: in the fact that a Christian will often say that he wants to seek God, but actually does not. The very moment he starts to want to find Him, he will find Him.

### 23. What should one repent of during one's final moments of life?

A person should repent of the sins he has not yet repented of. He should also ask that the Lord Himself cleanse him, even from secret sins he has forgotten. We should ask the Lord to make us worthy of His kingdom; not because we deserve it, but because of His great mercy, because of His blood that He shed for us on the Cross.

### 24. Do we need to call a sin by its name?

At the beginning of our Christian life we repent of actions, but not of sins. Should we call a sin by its name? If a person consciously disguises his sins—for instance, if he names a less serious sin instead of another in order appear good in the priest's eyes—then this is not confession, but rather an attempt at deception. Then he must repent of two sins. But if we are talking about a person calling a sin by some other name simply out of ignorance, then there is no need to confess over again; one should just do good to others and live in a godly way.

### 25. Can love for one's neighbor cover that person's sins?

It is said that "love covers all sins. The Lord has covered all sins. More than anything else, love one another, because love covers everything." Does this mean that love for one's neighbor equals forgiveness of sins? Sins are forgiven under one small condition: "When I hear the cry of your voice, then I will forgive you." To cover means to not allow evil to spread further. What does our love do? Take, for instance, a grenade lying with its pin pulled out; and over this grenade is placed a concrete framework or a sarcophagus like the one in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. In the same way, love prevents the infection of evil from spreading further. Like a shell, it restrains evil from spreading in the person himself as well as around him. In order to be rid of evil, however, it is not my decision that is necessary, but that of the person sinning. But if I sin then it is by my decision. It is not my love that will blot out my neighbor's sin, but his repentance. My love will restrict the sin's condition, but repentance can heal the inner transgression.

### 26. How should one understand the words "Know ye not that we shall judge the angels (1 Cor. 6:3)"?

It is very simple: the martyrs will condemn the demons—rebellious angels—by their deeds. They will place their exemplary sufferings before the face of God, thus showing that the demons' might is powerless against them,

and the demons will be condemned for the martyrs' sufferings. This is why it says in prayers to the martyrs, "Thou hast put to shame the audacity of the demons." That is, they show that the demons have proved powerless; their bodilessness did not work in their favor. A person of flesh and blood proves more powerful than the devil and his angels of darkness. The martyrs themselves will condemn the demons, and by their prayers the demons will be thrown into the everlasting fire. It is no coincidence that the end of the world, as we know, will come about by the prayers of the martyrs.

### 27. Does man himself participate in his own salvation?

God saves us. This is why He is called the Savior, the only Savior. But He does not save us without our involvement. God offers and we respond. Some might say, "Only faith in Christ saves us." What does "only faith" mean? Faith makes salvation accessible to us; that is, through faith we come to salvation. How do we receive salvation? Through triple immersion in the font, calling on the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; through receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and communing of the Body and Blood of Christ. This is the manner in which we receive salvation. Salvation is further obtained by our cooperation with God, the reformation of our reason, the appearance of spiritual reason, the reformation of our heart into a spiritual heart, the reformation of our will, etc. This is how we participate in our salvation; but it is God Who saves us.

### 28. What is the correct way to convey the word of God?

First of all, let us talk about pride. It is something that permeates a person's entire being. People say, "I fast, and I'm proud of it. But when I don't fast I'm proud of that as well." It is something that continually accompanies a person until the Lord Himself heals him of it completely. There are good times and bad times to speak about the word of God. If a person is ready to hear, then we need to speak to him. If it starts a debate, then we need to say, "This is what God says. If you don't like it, that's your problem." Truth is born not from debates, but from the Word of God the Father, and is called Jesus Christ. However, the Bible does acknowledge debates; and this hatred of debating that inflicts people today is from the devil. The devil is trying to deprive people of reason and prevent Christians from debating. Usually it works out to a double standard, where Christians are not allowed to debate, but to debate with Christians is fine. They can sling mud at any of Christ's truths, but you cannot defend them in any way. This is a misguided approach. We can debate; we need to debate—only peacefully, with meekness and fear **(1 Pet. 3:15)**. One can debate perfectly calmly, supporting one's point of view with sound reason, and there is nothing wrong in that. A person can choose either one thing or another; that is what a choice is, and he is the one who will answer for himself. If you tell someone the word of God precisely and objectively, and that person gets angry, then it is that person's problem and not yours.

### 29. How can we pray in such a way that after praying it would be impossible to curse?

Here is what David says about this: *Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand* **(Ps. 73:23)**. We wear crosses around our necks; God is before me, standing to my right; how can we possibly swear? We need to always remember that both during and after prayer we are always standing before God Who is constantly with us. We can also make the sign of the cross over our mouth; that makes it easier. And if we keep the Lord's crucifixion in mind as well, then it will be very easy.

### 30. How can we learn to truly love God?

We can learn from God Himself. We need to ask that God's love be poured into our hearts. Apostle Paul talks about this very thing. We must bear sorrows joyfully because from sorrow comes patience, from patience comes experience, from experience comes hope; and hope does not disappoint, because God's love fills our hearts with the Holy Spirit. This is precisely the path by which we can learn God's love. Without patience there is no salvation. When you endure, you become more experienced; you become more experienced and you see how God helps you. And as you see God helping you, you begin to trust in Him. You begin to trust in God, and God's love pours into you together with the Holy Spirit, Who is already within us. If someone

is unbaptized, it is imperative that he receive the Holy Spirit beforehand, because without this nothing will be accomplished.

### 31. What should one do if he continually doubts the sincerity of his faith?

Faith is the question "Is there a God or not?" If the answer is yes, then you have faith. If it is no, then you do not have faith. Behave as though you trusted God. God is wise, God is powerful, and He never fails us. Why should we not trust Him? Behave this way, and true faith will come. True trust will come, for this is God's gift.

### 32. How did the recluses commune?

A recluse lives in the forest. Usually there is a church nearby, and his spiritual father comes every week to confess and commune him. There have been instances where people lived in the desert; they either received Communion from the angels, like St. Onuphrius, or went to church at least once a year for confession and Communion.

### 33. How does one preach the gospel?

The tidings that God came and saved us all are good tidings for any person—both for the enlightened and the unenlightened. If a person is akin to truth, he will know that

this is the truth. If a person is not akin to truth, if his heart has grown fat, his eyes bloated, his ears stopped up, then truth is useless to him.

### 34. How did Herodias die?

Salome's death was not witnessed by Herod. She died in a nearby river, but nobody saw it. Her head was brought later, after it was cut off by ice. Her body was never found. According to tradition, Herodias and Herod were swallowed up by the earth during an earthquake in Spain.

### 35. Who instituted Holy Communion?

Holy Communion was instituted by Jesus Christ Himself at the Mystical Supper. And when preparing for Communion, the Russian Church requires that one go to confession. The tradition in the Greek Church is a little different: there, confession and Communion are separate, and each person decides when to confess and commune, according to his conscience. Our current practice was instituted by our local Church.

### 36. What does it mean to love one's neighbor as oneself?

*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* **(Mt. 22:39; Lk. 10:27; Jas. 2:8)**. This commandment was given for the first time in the Old Testament, in Leviticus, chapter 19. Christ loved

people so much that He gave Himself up as a sacrifice for their sins; we must also love one another in Christ to such an extent as to be willing to sacrifice ourselves. The Lord loved us and died for us all; we must likewise love our neighbors and be ready to sacrifice ourselves for them. Sacrifice is inherent in Christianity. As for Christ's love, Christ sacrificed Himself for our sake. This is a higher love. What does "love thy neighbor as thyself" mean? It means to treat your neighbor as you treat yourself. This is an ancient commandment. And the Lord says that you will be doing even more if you sacrifice yourself for the sake of your neighbor. This is a higher love.

### 37. What sorts of miracles are happening in our times?

If in the past many came to faith on seeing those whom Christ raised from the dead or healed from an illness, then this is not the case now; there are very few such instances. It has become difficult to convince people to believe in Christ God. However, angels still exist today, and there are miracles enough to fill the ocean. In Moscow alone there are hundreds of miracles recorded. Who records them? Where there are miracles, they will be recorded. For instance, there is a whole book that was published called *The Miracles of the Healer Panteleimon*. The greatest miracle is the grace-filled fire that descends on Pascha. You do not even have to travel far: there are so many in Moscow alone. Drive to Serpukhov: there are so many rings there. And each ring represents someone healed from an illness. Why do so many flock to

St. Matrona? Naturally, she helps some, some she does not; God acts when He wills. Sometimes it is better for us to be sick for a bit.

### 38. What sorts of works should the rich and the poor do?

Every person has a duty to fulfill the word of God, but in different ways. A rich person has received his riches in order to help the poor as much as possible. A poor person, if his poverty is due not to a shameful life but to circumstances—for instance, arson, fire, disability, orphanhood, or one of the many other causes along these lines—then he should embrace his poverty as a chance to pray for the rich person when he receives help from him. Then the situation will benefit them both. It will benefit the rich person because he shows charity to the poor person, and it will benefit the poor person because he shows charity to the rich person by his prayers. The result is mutual support: God's original intention. In Deuteronomy God said that He would never allow there to be no poor people: *For the poor shall never cease out of the land* **(Deut. 15:11)**. This was so that there would be this division. There has to be this division—so that people will help each other. There is no equality with God, and in fact, God is against equality. "Difficulties for those who pray and prayers for those who have difficulties." This is one of God's very interesting and beautiful principles. However, it is disfigured by communism and capitalism. It is a disfiguration in both instances: in the idolization of wealth and in the idolization of poverty.

### 39. What is the relationship between a spiritual father and his spiritual child?

A spiritual father's duty is to pray for his spiritual child. He must look to his growth, give him advice founded on Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and he must be his spiritual child's chief advocate before God. A spiritual father is responsible for his spiritual child to the extent to which he is obeyed. It is impossible that he should be answerable for his spiritual child when his spiritual child does not listen to his advice; he is no longer a spiritual child then. A spiritual child must in turn pray for his spiritual father, obey him in everything that does not contradict God's will, and he must see his spiritual father as a teacher helping him into heaven. If a spiritual child decides to enter into conflict with his spiritual father, then it must be understood that this is not a spiritual child; rather, he is behaving like an antagonist. This is not the relationship of a teacher and pupil, but the behavior of a disputer, who will never learn anything. Many spiritual children today consider it their personal duty to correct their spiritual father. The spiritual child will never gain anything beneficial from such an approach.

### 40. How were the apocryphal books selected?

It was not man who determined which apocryphal books were heretical, but God through man; thus, there were no errors. The Holy Spirit abides in the Church to this

day, instructing the Church in everything; and that is why no error was possible. The councils acted in the government's interests only if the government was acting in God's interests. And such instances occurred regularly because the heart of the tsar is in the hand of God. Governmental authority was instituted by God, and it must not oppose Him. If it opposes Him, then it is acting against its own nature.

### 41. Why did the Lord command that a stone be placed on the bottom of the Jordan in place of the ones taken out at His command (book of Joshua)?

So that the Hebrews would remember the manner in which the Lord performed this miracle; so that they would feel with their own hands and be convinced. And so that there would be a memorial there until the time of the Lord's Judgment.

### 42. Why did the Hebrews not practice circumcision during their 40-year journey in the wilderness?

Because the commandment regarding circumcision was given to make a distinction between the Hebrews and other people. And given that there were no other people in the wilderness, this distinction was not necessary. The second reason is that when the Hebrews were in the wilderness they were in a state of despondency and despair, and did not circumcise their children. This is why the Lord said

to Joshua*: This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you* **(Josh. 5:9)**—because despondency is a slave-like mentality, and Joshua had reinstituted circumcision when the Hebrews entered the Holy Land.

### 43. When was the first book of the Bible written?

The first book of the Old Testament was written in 1780 B.C., and the last book was written in 400 B.C. This is in regard to the canonical books. The last non-canonical book—2 Maccabees—was written 128 years before Christ's birth. The first non-canonical book of the Old Testament is the book of Job. The book of Genesis appeared in its current form in 1675 B.C.

### 44. Should we invite people to come to church and commune if they do not know the Symbol of Faith?

If a person does not know the words to the Symbol of Faith, but believes in accordance with the words, then such a person may be invited to commune; although you should definitely tell him that it is essential that he learn the Symbol of Faith. If a person does not believe in accordance with the Symbol of Faith, he may not be invited to commune—if a person does not believe in the Trinity, for instance. And if a person does not believe in Christ the God-man, it would be unthinkable to invite him to commune. First a person must believe in the Holy Trinity, in Christ the God-man, in

His redemptive sacrifice, in the resurrection of the flesh, and then go to confession and so forth.

### 45. What if a person gets very angry and annoyed after Communion?

It means that he has not repented of this at confession and has not received forgiveness.

### 46. Will sinners suffer eternal torment for momentary wickedness?

The person did not want to make peace with God; he rose up against God and rebelled. For instance, why should a person be punished just for pushing a little red button (to set off a nuclear bomb)? The person simply pressed a button, but it wiped out a few million people. The duration of an action and its consequences are very different things. It only takes a second to stab with a knife, but this does not mean that the consequences will also be as brief. And it is in eternity that the consequences for one's evil deeds will take place if a person does not decide to correct himself. Every evil deed is a scar on the soul. The comparison to linen rags is an interesting one. Nothing whole remains in the person; the more evil the person does, the less whole he becomes. This is what chastity is: when a person becomes whole. And conversely, a sinful person is ragged; there is no longer anything real in him. He is a completely disheveled creature in which there

is nothing left to save, if he himself does not wish to be saved. This is a person who has destroyed himself.

Every evil deed is punishable. God said plainly that one's ability to choose ends at the moment of death. And this is not by chance; this is directly connected with the fact that a person is a union of soul and body. A part of a person cannot make decisions for the whole person. No evil can be forgiven if it is not repented of. That is why evil is so evil: it is not some kind of human illness that can be cured without the person's participation. In order to turn away from evil one needs to make a willing effort. This is an illness that affects the will—it is a rebellion. The soul cannot exercise its will because the soul is only a part of a person and not a whole person. The purpose of the sacrament of unction is the healing of the body and soul from illnesses. The rite uses the words "remission of sins," and remission means the cessation of consequences. We do not have any testimony—biblical or otherwise—which says that forgotten sins are forgiven. There is not even any mention of this in the sacrament of unction. If you listen to the entire rite of unction, there is not a single instance where it says, "I forgive you all your forgotten sins."

### 47. Which of the Holy Fathers speaks about the divine nature?

Which teachings of which Holy Fathers include a teaching on the Holy Trinity? St. Athanasius the Great has a few discourses against the Arians. He also has a discourse on the

Holy Spirit. There is St. Gregory the Theologian's discourse *On Divine Incomprehensibility* and the discourses of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great *On the Holy Spirit.* There is a lot about the divine nature in St. Cyril of Alexandria's book "Glaphyra."

### 48. Who are the Goths, and what is their relation to Satanists?

The Goths are an ideology of authorized despondency and hopelessness; it is a sort of attraction to death. The remembrance of death can be normal when a person uses it in order to cut himself off from this world; but the Goths' attraction to death is an unhealthy one, and it leads to a person's being attracted to the one who holds the dominion of death, that is, the devil; often they are attracted to evil. It is no accident that Satanists are recruited in Gothic circles. Goths are not by definition Satanists—they are people who are terribly despondent and depressed; but they are very similar to Satanists. Goths become Satanists very, very quickly. This is because secular society holds no answers to the Goths' questions. What can society offer to the Goths or to a person who has taken an interest in Gothicism? Society says, "Forget everything! Don't give a darn about anything. Life is good, it's wonderful! You'll have a lovely wife, your own business, and everything will be great." And a Goth's response to this is "What good is this to me if I'm going to die?" It is a perfectly logical response.

What value does all this have if I am mortal? But what is the Christian's answer? You are right to disdain everything earthly, but it is not right that you are fixated on death. Beyond the borders of death you will find eternal life. Death is not the end: it was conquered by Christ, and resurrection awaits us. You are correct, but you did not think it through enough. You have not thought it through, and that is why you are being drawn toward the devil. Those who come close to the truth but miss the mark draw close to Satan. Satanism is very similar to Christianity—almost the same—but in a slightly different direction. Like the devil's deception in paradise: also almost the same, but not quite. For them death is the final reality; this is the reason why they are in a state of despair and despondency. Despondency and despair, however, are healed by hope.

In the Symbol of Faith there is a direct response to the Goths: "I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come." We respond to the Goths' despair with hope in the resurrection of the dead and eternal life afterward. Gothicism is too much for the world to handle. We, however, have an answer for them. It is very important to note that Christ's Church, the glorious treasury that the Lord created, has all the answers to humanity's delusions. Delusion feeds off truth, off the distortion of truth. The Church possesses the truth that heals every distortion. The Church is all-knowing. It does not call everything bad. It tells us what is bad and what is good.

### 49. At the crucifixion, where were the nails driven in?

There is a theory that they were driven into Christ's wrists and not into his palms. However, so that the body would stay intact on the cross, nails were usually driven into the palms at an angle. The imprint on the burial shroud is only from one side, so we cannot tell for sure. However, Christ being depicted with nails through His hands is very ancient and is historically accurate.

### 50. How should the Lord's words concerning prophets be explained?

In chapter 23 of the Gospel according to Matthew, it says: woe to you because you built tombs for the prophets whom your fathers killed. The answer is very simple. What were the Jews doing at the time? On the one hand they built the prophets tombs, but on the other, they themselves continued to kill the prophets. There were many times when they wanted to kill Christ. In other words, they were literally the children of those who killed the prophets. They carried on their practice—just like a family business. They say it was their fathers who killed the prophets. The Lord replies, "Outwardly you build tombs, but you continue to do evil. You should have put a stop to this tradition and hated the condemnation which was upon you." They did not want to reform; if they had wanted to, they would have reformed. It is not enough just to build tombs; they also needed to not

do the things their fathers did. They needed to reform, not facilitate St. John the Baptist's execution and not try to kill Christ. It never occurs to people that if you have been justly accused of some sin there is a remarkable resource: we can say: "Forgive me, Lord. I will not do this any more." This is a very simple resource, but evidently it does not occur to people. This is because people want to make excuses for themselves.

### 51. Can we give advice to those who have gone astray?

We should give advice only when we are asked for it. If they are expecting you to condemn them, you should tell the deluded that they are going astray. For instance, if they tell you that everyone drinks, everyone fornicates, everyone steals, you should reply, "No, not everyone." God has called these things sinful. We cannot approve of evil. Heretics need to be taught. You can correct them two or three times.

### 52. Can a loving person slander and insult someone he loves?

We have a problem with our language. In Greek there are five terms for the word "love" and then a special term for the word "like." But with us it is "I love potatoes, I love my wife, I love this person, I love God, I love shoes"—and

the same word is being used in every case. Such a person is, of course, capable of loving, but only in the sense of "I love cutlets." We need to move on to a new context. We must love in Christ, forgive for the sake of Christ, but not allow people to take advantage of us—for instance, when someone says, "You owe it to me." Show me the bill and I will pay it. Or if not, then ask me for something in Christ's name and I will do it.

### 53. Is it possible to repent and then sin?

Confession presupposes that a person does not consider the sinful state of his life to be normal; he tries to struggle against it. He considers a life filled with smoking or something else to be something unnatural to him, and he tries to struggle against it. He may stumble, but he will try to get up and move on. But a person who puts off correction for the future is saying in a way, "I'm going to live in evil. It's normal for me to live in evil. Maybe I'll mend my ways later on, but right now I don't care." This kind of person is indifferent to God. The people who say "I'll repent later" are not usually given a chance from God to repent. It is one thing when a person is fighting and loses one of the rounds. It is another thing when he immediately gives up. There is a man with a machine gun fighting the fascists during the war: it is one thing for him to get hit by gun-fire, fall, get bandaged up, recover, and go back to fight again. It is another thing for him to see the fascists coming, throw his hands in the

air and his gun to the ground, and say, "Here I am. Take me away." Here is the difference between a person who confesses, falls in the dirt, and confesses again, and a person who does not confess at all.

The Lord looks at the state of a person's heart at the moment of his death. "As I find him, so shall I judge him." God looks, and if you have turned away from all your evil deeds, then none of your evil deeds will be remembered. But if you were righteous and decided to abandon righteousness for evil, then all your righteous deeds will be wiped away. God does not judge according to what was, but according to what now is. Some people ask, "Why did God choose Judas even though He knew that he would be a traitor?" Because Judas, at that given moment, was worthy. That is why He chose him.

### 54. Is it permitted to make confession and receive holy unction during one's monthly?

There is no conclusive opinion on this question. I think that if there is not some urgent need, then one should not make confession or receive holy unction during her monthly. But if there is serious illness, she should definitely receive holy unction—it was established with the sole purpose of healing. And the woman with an issue of blood—she touched Christ when she was sick. And if someone has a serious sin on her conscience, she should go to confession.

## 55. May we judge Catholics and Protestants or members of other religions?

We should judge the creeds of the Protestants, Catholics, and members of other religions, but not the people. When St. Theophan the Recluse was asked, "Will Catholics be saved?" he said, "I don't know whether Catholics will be saved, but if I become a Catholic I won't be saved." In saying this he was not being uncaring or saying that people outside the Church would not be saved; he was directing our attention elsewhere. We must condemn heresy, but not condemn the person. Missionaries make a huge mistake when they start to treat people with contempt, telling them, "You're a sinner, you're filth." The Lord did not do that and neither did the apostles. The apostles proclaimed the good tidings of salvation and then said, "These are the commandments of God. Do you recognize yourself in some of them? Do you know what the consequences will be? Do you know how to correct yourselves? I am telling you how to correct yourselves." Exhortation of this sort is successful. But when a person does not talk about God and instead begins to point out another person's sins, then no real good will come of it; it only causes resentment. This is the reason why wise missionaries—while condemning the heresy of the Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Jews, and so on—at the same time do not pass judgment on the people themselves. Because, as Apostle Paul said: *For what have I to do with judging outsiders* **(1 Cor. 5:12)**? Judge yourselves. God will judge those outside the Church.

### 56. How should one interpret the verse from Psalm 10: "He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor…when he draweth him into his net" (Ps. 10:9)?

He lies in ambush, that is, like a rich man sitting in secret, like a lion in his den: carefully; no one can see him. He lies in wait so that he can seize the poor man when he catches him in his net. He wants to draw him into his net, seize, and kill him.

### 57. What are practice and habit?

Practice produces habit, and habit produces feeling; and when something is done in connection with the senses it becomes almost inseparable from you. Practice always leads to skill as well. If you make yourself do something, it becomes a habit. Let us say you have grown accustomed to praying; that is because you made it a part of your routine and it became a habit. Practice turns into feeling. Over time, habit outwardly transforms the very soul. You know the story about the deformed young man who for many years was made to wear a mask of a handsome face. When he took the mask off, his face had become handsome. In just the same way, when a person compels himself to do something good outwardly, the effort transforms him inwardly as well. We need to raise not only our hands to heaven, but also our heart. We need to stand erect before God not just in body,

but also in soul. Thus, practice turns into feeling, into an inner state felt by one's heart and soul. And that which has become one with our senses, with the inner make-up of our soul, is very difficult to remove. It is one thing to cease saying your prayer rule if you say it inattentively; but it is another thing to cease praying once it has become second nature to you. That is much more difficult, fortunately.

## 58. Could the economic crisis be a sign of the antichrist's coming?

*It is not for us to know the times or seasons* **(Acts 1:7)** which the Lord has appointed in His power, as Jesus Christ has told us. We do not know when the enemy will come. We do know for a fact that there will be 1490 days from the beginning of the antichrist's reign to the second coming of Christ. We know this for certain. The time of the antichrist's reign is unknown to us, as is the coming of Christ. As for the current situation, electronic funds are beginning to be rejected. We are the ones behind this economic chaos, and we can see that; we are playing right into the hands of the enemy of mankind. This crisis is God's judgment on a world of usury, on a world built on high-interest house loans. God's judgment hangs over this world. When a banker invests money in an enterprise and makes a profit, there is nothing wrong in that. But when a person lives off interest, that is usury. That is not pleasing to God.

### 59. Why did Christ say, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 7:21)?

One must believe whole-heartedly in the Resurrection of Christ. One can say, "Lord, Lord" with his mouth but not believe in his heart. This is why it is said: *Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father Which is in heaven.*

### 60. What is a parental blessing?

In the Bible a parental blessing was mainly performed by the father. Because of the large number of divorces, we saw the appearance of a situation whereby the children were inevitably given into the mother's custody (boys, however, should never be given to the mother: boys should always be given to the father), resulting in confusion as to the gender of the child being raised. The Soviet system, which always gave the child to the mother, produced an entire generation of men completely unable to stand up for themselves, and who lack the least bit of masculinity and experience. People today have forgotten something very simple: no matter who it is—boy or girl—they must remember that, regardless of whether their parents live together or not, or whether or not they are divorced, both parents must be honored—not just the mother.

It is best of course to ask a blessing from both. If your parents are opposed to your future spouse for some unbiased reason, it is worth listening to them. If they object to the marriage because of your one-and-only's small paycheck—this at a time when the fellow has a good profession, but which currently does not pay very much—then it would be all right not to listen to your parents. However, if he is a good-for-nothing who lies on the couch scratching his belly, then that is a situation where it would be an extremely good idea to listen to your parents. It is very common today for girls to say hysterically, "I'm already 19 years old and still unmarried! I'm lost!" Then she gets married to no one knows whom and ends up thanking God that the Orthodox Church does not prohibit divorce. There are times when divorce is necessary, but under other circumstances a person could perish. Therefore, you should ask the advice of your parents or whomever is raising you, because (a) they have experience, and (b) they are not in love, so their judgment is clearer.

### 61. What was the fate in the afterlife of those people who died in the Great Flood?

Those who died in the Great Flood were punished for their human sins; but the Lord gave them time for repentance, and even once the flood began they had 40 days to repent. The earth was only fully covered by water 40 days after the beginning of the Great Flood. This could not have

changed their earthly fate because their earthly fate was already decided, but it could have affected their fate in the afterlife. When Christ descended into hell those people who repented were given the opportunity to live with their immortal souls in harmony with God.

### 62. Do the tollhouses exist?

What happens to the soul? What is the nature of the soul's will, and does it even exist? Should we believe what we find in the book *The Tollhouses of Theodora*? Yes, we should. *The Tollhouses of Theodora* is a classic description of the tollhouses, and it is accepted by the Church. Regarding the tollhouses, we know from Holy Scripture that after death a person's soul departs to God, Who gave it. As it is said, the soul departs to God, Who gave it, and the body goes to the ground: *for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return* **(Gen. 3:19)**. After death the soul on its way to God rises through the air, which is within the dominion of the prince of darkness, the spirit of wickedness in high places **(Eph. 6:12)**. And "tollhouse" is the name given to the last temptation of the spirit of wickedness; in other words, a place where taxes are paid. Why are they called tollhouses? Because the demons try to find something in the soul that belongs to them and take the soul for their own. This is the soul's final test, and at this test the soul's performance will correspond to its state at the moment of death. This is the final assertion of the will, which ceases toward the end

of the tollhouses. Also, the tollhouses will not necessarily involve intimidation, like the ones Blessed Theodora experienced. This happens, but only with Christians.

It usually happens differently with people whose faith is weak. They are tripped up by whatever it was that they idolized on earth. For example, after his death a glutton might see an enormous table covered with rich foods; he throws himself at it, and the demons grab him and take him where he belongs. But those people who strove and continue to strive toward God—those the demons try to frighten, so that they lose hope in God. There are a great many examples of the tollhouses throughout church history. There are descriptions of these tollhouses by St. Gregory the Theologian; and the soul of St. Macarius the Great was seen ascending to the heavens while the demons strove to trip him up by vainglory. The demons were crying, "You have defeated us!" And he would answer, "Not yet!" But when he had entered the doors of paradise he said, "Yes, I have defeated you by the power of Jesus Christ." The tollhouses definitely do exist, and everyone will have to pass through them.

Besides the fact that all the sins for which a person did not atone are recorded in a book, the demons also lie and try to tempt people. A person is answerable only for his actions and the thoughts that he accepted. When a demon puts an evil thought into someone's head, he looks attentively at that person's face, at his reaction. If the person sighs, raises his eyes to heaven, signs himself with the sign of the

cross, and asks God for help, then the demon leaves. If he sees that there is agreement in the person's face, then all these instances are recorded. After death the conscience is revealed, and you will be unable to hide anything. Usually a person goes through the tollhouses on the third day after his death, or from the first day through the third; it happens in different ways. But very frequently the tollhouses are described as taking place specifically on the first day.

Some say that the soul wanders the earth for a certain time, but these things happen in various ways. There are key days, the 3rd, 9th, and 40th, that pertain to the fate of the soul after death, but they are not binding. Many saints' lives have the tollhouses beginning immediately after death. From the 3rd through the 9th day the Lord shows the soul paradise, and from the 9th through the 40th, hell; passage through the tollhouses takes place up until the 3rd day. The most important prayer for the departed is the funeral on the 3rd day, and it takes place on the day when particular help is needed. But once again, the tollhouses can last for a shorter or longer period of time. Even if the funeral is put off until the 5th or 6th day, you should still definitely have the person commemorated at Liturgy and have a panykhida served. You must give the person support.

St. Mark of Athens, as an example, was detained at the tollhouses for one hour, and some do not pass through them at all. The general rule is that we must remember that they are there. Some, if they died after communing and are

worthy, pass through the tollhouses instantly. If someone dies on a day when he communed, and if he is worthy, then he passes through the tollhouses instantly. The soul has a concept of time; all beings created by God exist in time. Both angels and demons exist in time. Only the Creator exists outside time. It is a mistake to think that there are some beings that exist within God's eternity. There is no one in God's eternity besides God. Professor Osipov says that the concepts of eternity and infinity are different. Yes, he is correct. Infinity is something that has a beginning but no end, but eternity has neither a beginning nor end and is outside time. For instance, our soul is infinite but not eternal. It has its beginning at the moment of conception but has no end after death.

### 63. Did the monks of Solovetsky Monastery do the right thing during the time of Patriarch Nikon?

They received a martyr's death, but it was not counted to them as righteousness. They were rebels against God, against the throne, and against the Church; and this was held against them as a sin and a cause for punishment. They rebelled, overthrew the rightful abbot, and began to blaspheme the Lord's holy sacraments on the pretext that the books had been changed. The books had merely been corrected; a more exact translation had been made. Monastics and all others are saved exclusively by the grace given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ through faith.

### 64. What are the fruits of Catholicism and Protestantism?

There are most definitely fruits. Holiness, in the traditional sense, has disappeared from Roman Catholicism in comparison with how it was in Rome before the West's falling away. Also, there arose the problem of terrible satanic heresies that ran unchecked. I would remind you that in Orthodoxy there have never been mass movements of this sort. For instance, in Germany whole districts were depopulated because voluntarily and without exception the entire population declared themselves Satanists. They said that they had personally made a pact with the devil. There has never been, nor could there be, any such phenomenon in Orthodoxy because the true Church is protected by the Holy Spirit. The attempts made by the Inquisition were attempts aimed at restraining by human strength an evil power that is impossible to restrain in such a manner. The Church of God acts not by words only, but by power. This power is certainly lacking in Protestantism, and we can see where this has led. In 400 years of Protestantism they have slid from the strictest discipline to justifying homosexuality and other similar things, the repulsiveness of which is evident to all.

### 65. How should we respond to our children?

Children often say to their parents, "You nervous wrecks! Why did you bring us into the world?" How should we respond? We need to tell them this: God gave you life,

and if you talk like that you are a rebel. You are acting out not against your parents, but against the One Who gave you life. Parents cannot give life; they are just the instrument by which God gives you life. Incidentally, it is for this very reason that they are worthy of honor, regardless of their behavior—as the instrument by which God gave you life. Take note of how precise the Lord's commandment is. The Lord does not tell us to love our father and mother but to honor them. This is precisely because a person is sometimes unable to love another person—for example, a murderer, an abuser, or a criminal; however, it is possible in any situation to honor the person through whom God gave you life. This is a very precise commandment that can invariably be kept. God never gives commandments that are impossible to keep. He knows His creation well.

### 66. How should we understand Christ's words "And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also" (Lk. 6:29)?

Christ's words need to be understood in the following way. Christ said that evil must not be allowed to spread further because of you. We may not counter evil with evil. That is the exact meaning of this commandment. However, when Christ was struck on the cheek by the high-priest, He did not respond with evil, but He did respond with justice. He said, *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well,*

*why smitest thou Me* **(Jn. 18:23)**? He put a stop to the iniquity not by hostility, but, on the contrary, by an invitation to act justly. He urged us towards virtue. Christ kept this commandment literally in the spirit in which He gave it: He countered evil with good; for it is a good thing to urge another toward justice.

### 67. If sins that have already been confessed trouble our thoughts, should we confess them again?

Anxiety over sins that have already been confessed is due to the devil's influence. Sometimes this uneasiness is due to the fact that a sin is like a wound on the soul; it is as though it brings filth into the soul along with it. The sin is extracted through confession, like a bullet, but an impression is left on the soul. This is healed not by confession, but by doing good works that are the opposite of that sin. John the Baptist said, "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." You must not confess a second time, because then it would appear that you do not believe in the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. If after confession you recall a sin you have not yet confessed, you must confess it the next time.

### 68. Why do troubles arise when the gospel is being preached?

When the apostles were preaching the gospel there would be public disturbances in the cities. God gave

a commandment: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* **(Mt. 28:19)**. This is God's commandment to preach the gospel to all the nations of the earth. If this preaching leads to strife, then so much the worse for those who are the cause of this strife. Today, for example, the Muslims are trying to condemn me for saying that Mohammed is not a prophet. But here I will not strive for peace if it goes against Holy Scripture. Preaching the gospel is a direct commandment from God, and I am not to break it. If, however, we are speaking of something that is neutral and unimportant, then one should defer to the other. We need to look at things from God's perspective, from the commandments' perspective, and from the perspective of heaven.

### 69. What does it mean when they say that a person must have a simple mind?

This may be understood in two ways: in a positive or negative sense. In the positive sense, if a person has a simple mind he does not have the ability to fantasize (he has been cured of this ability), and he sees the world through God's eyes. He sees everything as it actually is, and does not have any fantasies continuously whirling about inside him. But in the negative sense, a simple mind is one that is enslaved to a certain passion and only thinks one way, doing whatever the passion tells him to do. Within this context, peo-

ple with simple minds are those who see everyone else as contemptible. Start a conversation with such a person and he will unfailingly turn it in a judgmental direction. Simplicity of this kind is also bad. There is also the ordinary meaning of simplicity, which is that people do not use their mind at all. This is an act of the will that is entirely beyond the mind's control, which makes it stupidity. When John Huss, the famous opponent of the Roman Catholic Church, was being burned at the stake, he saw an old lady bring her last bundle of kindling, meant for her home, and lay it on the fire. "Ah, holy simplicity!" he cried.

### 70. Why is there a division into men's and women's monasteries?

The division into women's and men's monasteries is due to something very simple and technical: these people have made a vow of chastity, and they should not be led into temptation. The vow of chastity is a vow that gives one the opportunity to be completely free and not tied down to the mundane things of the world. The problem lies not in sexual relations as such, but in the busyness that surrounds family life. A person who for love of God has chosen not to have a family in order to become a monastic has simply discovered a new level of freedom. And so as not to drag that person into sin, into the sin of fornication, the Church places limits on the person. While a person is still able to fall into sin, why push him closer to the edge?

## 71. Why are there differences in the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible?

This is due to the different diacritical marks in the Hebrew text. The fact is that the Hebrew text has no vowels and can be read in various ways. There are also a variety of diacritical marks that could be chosen. Besides that, there are certain differences of opinion as to the interpretation of the text. And this raises the question: which tradition's interpretation of the text formed the basis for the translation. Most important for the Church, naturally, is the Greek text. And as the latest discoveries in the Qumran show, this text is more ancient than the text preserved by the Jews. But at the same time, it is a well-known fact that the Greek translators at times did not convey certain messianic passages as clearly. This is due to their interpreting certain passages as pertaining to Israel, the people of God, from whom the Messiah was to descend. And this interpretation was no accident, since for the Bible the Messiah and Israel are inseparably connected; for the Messiah—our Savior Jesus Christ—appeared in order to fulfill the promise made to Israel of old and to become the head of the new Israel, that is, the Orthodox Church. Thus, the Messiah and the Church are connected, as the head is to the body.

This in particular was the basis for the interpretations found in the Greek translation and in certain passages of the book of Isaiah. What should one do in this instance? Blessed Augustine wrote that when the Hebrew text speaks

more clearly, we should use it; and when the Greek is more clear, then we should use it. For one and the same Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets and the translators, enriching us with an abundance of meanings. God gives us an entire array of meanings, stored in a few words. There are no contradictions in these texts: these texts complement one another. The Bible is seen as a three-dimensional picture, as a crystal, if you will. The Hebrew text, the Hebrew translation, is one side of the crystal; and the other side of the crystal is the Greek text. The fullness of the revelation is conveyed when both are viewed together as a complementary unit. This in particular is why we use both texts; because the meaning of Holy Scripture, the meaning behind God's word, does not fit into human words. It is vast and requires a vast ocean of interpretations.

### 72. Is it true that due to their corrupt life only the West and the western half of Russia suffered during World War II?

During World War II, of all the nations the Chinese suffered most: around 50 million people died. But many other nations suffered as well. That is the very reason why this war was called a World War: people from all over the world suffered. World War II encompassed Europe, the Soviet Union, the Middle East, Persia, Iran, China, Korea, Japan, Manchuria—that is an enormous area. Every country had its own punishment. The punishment was for apostasy. Man is a creature that is not well-grounded in good. As it is

said, "In doing good they show themselves to be fools; but in doing evil they are masters." This is called original sin: that very parasite that entered mankind because of Adam and Eve.

### 73. Where does it say to keep the first day of the week, Sunday, holy?

There are the words in psalm 118, where it says: *This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it* **(Ps. 118:24)**. On the day on which the Lord performed great works we will rejoice and be glad. And on this basis the day on which God's great glory appeared—the most exalted glory of the Resurrection—was celebrated as an additional feast. The claim that the Sabbath day was transferred to Sunday is false. No one abolished the Sabbath day as such: its brightness simply faded in comparison with the Resurrection. The Sabbath day, Saturday, is a feast day; according to the typicon, Liturgy is prescribed to be served on Saturdays. Strict fasting is forbidden on Saturday, and fewer prostrations are made. On Sunday, prostrations in church cease altogether. Thus, Saturday remains somewhat festive. Sunday, however, is the greater feast: this is the day of the appearance of God's glory. This feast began to be celebrated at the moment when the angel descended and said "Christ is Risen." It was at this moment that this feast began to be celebrated as a feast greater than the Sabbath day. The transfiguration of the world is a bigger miracle than its creation.

### 74. Where in the Bible does it speak about judgment and justice?

*For Thou hast maintained my judgment and my cause; Thou hast sat upon a throne, O Thou that judgest righteousness* **(Ps. 9:5)**. Remember that the word "judgment" means the arrival of the triumph of justice. This is why David and many saints demanded judgment, and many saints to this day wait and pray for the day of the Last Judgment to come, when the Lord will restore complete and perfect justice between all people. Our dealings with one another will be settled, and everyone will be given according to his deeds.

### 75. Where in the Bible does it say that Eber refused to build the tower of Babel?

Nowhere. This is tradition that has been kept both by the Jews and by the Orthodox—by the hierarchs John Chrysostom and Dimitry of Rostov, for instance, as well as a number of other holy fathers. Blessed Augustine, for one. This is ancient tradition, based on a very simple biblical fact: all the names of the patriarchs, beginning with Adam and Eve, have a meaning, but only in the Hebrew language; that is, in all other languages these names have no meaning, but they sound the same as the Hebrew. The Europeans, Koreans, Arabs, and a number of Indian tribes have genealogies that describe the Flood and antediluvian civilization, which mention the names of the first postdiluvian patriarchs and the antediluvian patriarchs; and they all coincide. They all sound

precisely the way that they are written in the Bible; but they only have meaning in the Hebrew language. John Chrysostom gives us a translation: "Eber means 'he who crossed the river.'" He crossed the river to avoid building the tower of Babel, and for this very reason preserved mankind's original language—because he did not build the tower of Babel.

### 76. What is civil marriage?

When a person has children outside marriage he often allows himself to fornicate. A child born without God's blessing will have a more difficult time going through life. Civil marriage, although it is registered, has no grace. It is tolerated by the Church if the husband and wife were unbelievers. If one of the spouses converts, and they had a civil marriage, the Church will allow the converted spouse to commune, because a person in this situation will sanctify the unbelieving spouse. But if the question is of so-called common-law marriage—free cohabitation—then in that case there can be no talk of any sort of sanctification. People can live together for decades, but it still will not be a marriage; it is not anything at all.

### 77. How should one behave during a service?

During a service one should stand the way Seraphim of Sarov is depicted, the way the Mother of God is depicted. This pose is a very comfortable one and practical. Our hands

should stay at our sides; in this position they will neither help nor hinder us. Our whole body was designed to help us pray and not hinder us. This is the reason why external aids in prayer help us and why we need to make use of them.

### 78. What is a priestly blessing?

A blessing is not simply a greeting, but the imparting of the grace and power of God. This is why it is so necessary to get the priest's blessing. It is not just a polite formality: it is receiving a blessing from him on our undertakings or on our life in general. You may ask a blessing on a specific matter, but in that case you must say what it is. But if it is just a general blessing, then you should say, "Bless me for the coming day." You may recall the priest in the book of Numbers. What did he do? Every morning and evening he would bless the people in the name of the Lord; and this is actually a wonderful rule that would be good to follow. One should not, however, run to the priest for a blessing three times at a single service as many do.

### 79. What is the correct way to end the prayer "Our Father"?

The Lord's Prayer is concluded with the doxology from the Gospel: "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory unto the ages. Amen." We can say it or not say it. We can say it, as our Orthodox faith tells us, because this text was given to us in the Gospel. But the fact that we usually do not say it is because we consider our Lord's Prayer incom-

plete without the Church. After all, we say "Our Father," not "My Father"; and this is precisely why the priest seals our prayers with the power and glory of the Holy Trinity.

### 80. In what manner did saints enter monasteries?

Some saints entered monasteries without their parents' blessings, and others waited until their parents had gone to the Lord. Where is the line here between doing God's will and keeping His commandment? In Christ's time no one wanted to leave the world for God's sake. The Pharisees wanted, in a way, to pay their way out of keeping the commandments—to make a donation in order to keep Mom and Dad happy. This is the case of a person using a formal ritual in order to bribe his parents or someone else, so that he can live in peace. John the Theologian and other saints, however, left the world specifically for the sake of God. The Pharisees did not go anywhere: they made money when people did not keep God's commandments. A person can dedicate himself to God and enter a monastery even without his parents' blessing.

### 81. Explain the meaning contained in these lines: "O Theotokos, Virgin…rejoice, cloak of boldness for the naked."

What is being said here is that the Mother of God is the hope of the naked, which gives them the boldness to pray to God. Naturally, when a person is naked no one

will talk to him. Go stand naked in the street and try to have a normal dialogue, let alone a bold one. Likewise we, having sinned, have stripped ourselves of God's glory. When Adam and Eve tasted the forbidden fruit, their eyes, as the devil had promised, were opened. They saw that they were naked, because God's grace had been stripped from them; and for this very reason they felt themselves naked; for this reason they had no boldness. They hid in the bushes; what kind of boldness is that? But through her labors the Mother of God gives us the boldness to turn to God, for she clothes people in God's grace—this by virtue of her prayer, and especially by virtue of her becoming the vessel of the uncontainable Word of God.

### 82. How should a martyr conduct himself when faced with death?

The normal Christian attitude is that Christians love martyrdom. We know of cases where Christians have had their children arrested and taken away, and they made no effort to resist. For example, there are Faith, Hope, and Love, who were executed; or the 40 martyrs: the mother of one of the dying martyrs carried him in her arms to the fire. Martyrdom is the greatest of all the rewards that could possibly be. One may conceal his family to avoid martyrdom or not; there is no sin in that.

### 83. What is biblical parallelism?

In the book of Psalms and in many other parts of the Bible one finds the concept of biblical parallelism; in other words, the first part of a verse is repeated in the second part of the verse, as though for clarification. For example: *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions* **(Ps. 51:1)**. Of what does mercy consist? The cleansing of transgressions. This is a feature that is very wide-spread in Scripture. Here eyes and ears signify God's benevolent attention toward the righteous; the face of the Lord is also a parallel, but not a benevolent one; it is God's attention turned toward the punishment of sinners.

### 84. Why is it that God does not give the grace of faith to unbelievers?

The grace of faith is given to those people who are predestined for salvation. Who is predestined for salvation? He who is searching for the truth. Whoever loves truth, whoever considers it important to learn where the truth is and where it is not—to such a person God will certainly reveal Himself. But he who does not search for the truth, does not want to know the truth, and does not want to know the will of God—that person will never learn anything. God does not give him faith, since he has rejected grace. A person must have within him the desire not to think himself absolutely right. If a person thinks he is right about everything,

then how can he be changed? The person pushes away what he is being given. Try to talk with someone who argues with everyone: is it possible to be friends with him? It is impossible: he isolates himself from any sort of friendship and love. It is the same with an unbeliever: he rejects friendship and love. Such a person is incapable of receiving anything from God—neither faith, nor anything else. But if a person is searching for the truth and begins to look for it on his own, then he will find it. If a person believes but has some doubts, he must ask God to strengthen his soul. Remember how it was in the Gospel: *Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief* **(Mk. 9:24)**.

When a person but makes the effort and asks God, then God invariably helps him. Why does the soul resist? Because that person has certain unrepented evil passions and habits from which he does not want to separate himself. And these evil habits are the very things that are hindering him; for example, if a person has become accustomed to getting everything through anger and temper tantrums. Like little children, when something does not go their way they start to hit things in a fit of rage, roll around on the floor, and get what they want by yelling, and so on. And the person thinks this is the way to be, although deep down he guesses that God would disapprove. And this raises a dilemma: one side of the soul pulls toward God, while the other side of the soul wants no part in it. Thus, a rift appears in the soul. How is this rift to be healed? If a person turns to God with the words: "Help me, Lord, to cope with myself. Help my

unbelief. Help me with whatever it is that is hindering me from drawing close to you"—God will then quickly come to that person's aid. God takes and cuts off the passion that is hindering him.

### 85. Why is it that the Europeans establish themselves so well on the earth?

Venerable Silouan the Athonite had an interesting thought. He says the reason that the Europeans have been able to establish themselves so well on the earth is that they had colossal strength because of their Christian past. But they took this strength, which God intended should help men ascend to heaven, and turned it towards the earth. And for this very reason Europe became strong in terms of social structure. This was Christianity's inheritance, which, naturally, had been distorted. Gradually that supply of talents given by God is running out; we are seeing the decline of Europe.

### 86. What will happen in the time of the antichrist?

The antichrist is emerging from this world. For Scripture there exist three religious communities. These are the pagans, including the Muslims, who believe only in one god chosen by them. The Jews are an apostate nation, which is deeper in sin than the pagans, since the Jews knew God, have actual Revelation from Him to this day, but still do not

obey Him. And the third community is the community of Christians: the Orthodox Church, the new people of God, gathered from all nations.

The antichrist will unite two religious communities: the community of apostates and that of the pagans. Now they are saying that the antichrist will come "on the shoulders of apostate Christians," but nowhere do we see this in Scripture. We see from Scripture that the Jews will play a special role in his coming. Moreover, this role will be such that the Jews will make him a king. But afterwards they will renounce him, in accordance with the Lord's word, on seeing his repulsive way of living, and by virtue of the preaching of the prophets Elijah and Enoch. Israel in fact will then join the Orthodox Church and be saved. As for the apostates from the Church, however, they will fall into paganism. We see today that those who leave the Church depart either into Judaism or paganism.

What is apostate Europe at present? It is paganism in its purest form. It is Satanism, occultism, magic, and witchcraft—worship of the creation rather than the Creator. But that is exactly what classic paganism is. Even the structure inherited from the apostolic Church is being destroyed, and the line of apostolic succession is being torn apart. The hierarchy's attempt to depart from God is leading to its disintegration. The apostolic line itself is preserved only provided there is faith: faith in the Triune God. Otherwise it will decay, crumble, and shrivel up. The ecumenical movement is a dead-end. It is an attempt to create a united Church with-

out joining the historical Church. This is a dead-end road: it will lead nowhere.

The syncretic movement, however, will lead to antichrist. What is syncretism? It is a clear manifestation of paganism. There is syncretism, and there is ecumenism. Ecumenism is now a nonentity. It was an attempt by Christians to unite and create a Church. The Protestants, for example, tried to create a Church. They were unsuccessful; and in fact, there was no way they could have been successful, because without being united to the actual apostolic Church, such a thing is impossible. Syncretism, however, is an attempt to unite all faiths. How did ecumenism begin? Ecumenism began with Cardinal Newman's branch theory. This theory originated in the 19th century in England and was directed at the historical (Orthodox) Church. It was adopted in part by Catholicism, but parts of it also began to unite the Protestants. It fell apart, however, due to the fact that people did not want to become part of the actual, historical Church.

Syncretism began about the same time, at a convention of all religions that was held in New York at the end of the 19th century, involving theosophy. These two things have parallels and coexist, but their ideologies are different. Ecumenism is withering away and dying; there is no other way for it to exist. Likewise with the ideology of the reunification of all Christian churches that inspired the founders of the communist movement: they withered away as well. This is because one needs not just to believe, but to commune

with the One in Whom he believes. What is ecumenism's mistake? The mistake lies in trying to create truth by means of selection. As a result, all the ecumenists have fallen headlong into paganism.

But here we have syncretism: a powerful movement—a new outbreak of paganism in the new world. This is the usual manner in which paganism manifests itself. What do pagans believe in? They say that there are lots of different gods and that we should honor them all. The main thing is that they be traditional. The idea of traditional confessions: that is syncretism. This is not the concept of branches; this is heresy. And the theory of traditional confessions is unchristian syncretism, because the theory suggests that any god may be honored; God has many names—call Him by whatever name you want; the main thing is that you believe; but what you believe in—that is not important. That is syncretism in its purest form. However, this is also outright paganism. This is precisely why St. Andrew of Caesarea emphasized that the antichrist would come from among the apostate Jews and the pagans. In a certain sense this is the antichurch. And the clergy, as such, and the people that try to go in that direction will simply fall to their ruin. It is useless to attempt to relocate the Church as a whole; nothing will come of it. It will crumble. Even the structure of our Church, which was set in place by the apostles, is such that it cannot function without faith in the Holy Trinity. It would be like a building with no foundation: everything would collapse.

## 87. What is a catacomb church?

There are a huge number of catacomb churches in the world. Their members are descendants of the actual catacomb Christians who lived during Soviet times. None of them have priests, and they became their own individual sects. They have a very peculiar belief: they believe that God repeatedly becomes incarnate among men. They imagine that God has once more manifested Himself in this or that person. This causes division among them. There are those called the Yershovtsy: they say that God became incarnate in the person of Michael Yershov. There is the catacomb church of the Nikolaievtsy: they say that God became incarnate in the person of Nicholas II. And there is the catacomb church of the Ioanites, who honored Fr. John of Kronstadt as God. They exist even today, in the Tambov province. It is a thoroughly unchristian movement, very sect-like.

And there are new catacomb churches; these are the product of the 90's. There is the "Russian True Orthodox Church" of the Tikhonites, which is a notably shady church. Back in the day there was a certain Gennady Sekachev who declared himself to be Bishop Seraphim, secretly ordained by Patriarch Tikhon. No one was present at the ordination of the patriarch Seraphim, and no one was aware of his being a bishop. And so, because of him there appeared the "Russian True Orthodox Church." The majority of the catacomb groups stem from the old-believers, headed by the scoundrel Amvrosy Sivers. Many catacomb groups stemmed from

the autocephalous Ukrainian Church as well. This includes the catacomb church of Raphael Prokofiev. Their center is on Radio Street, building no. 12. The church of Archangel Raphael is located there. It is a sort of magic sect: it practices magic and combines it with Christianity in some way.

With the catacomb groups there are as many autocephalous churches as there are members. The more bishops there are, the more autocephalous churches there are, and they condemn one another using abusive language. And above all they condemn the Moscow Patriarchate.

The most active are the Raphaelovtsy; and they are one of the most dangerous sects. It is deep-seated paganism disguised as Orthodoxy. These sects are easily recognized: if they are not governed by the Moscow Patriarchate then they are a sect. We have no other canonical churches in Russia. Churches should have a sign that reads: "A Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate."

The catacomb groups rejected Christ the Messiah. It is impossible for the Jews not to have known that He was the Messiah. Recently even, there was an interesting occurrence: Fr. Oleg Stenyaev was talking with a certain rabbi and asked him,

"What was happening in Judaism during the first century A.D.?"

The rabbi answered,

"That was a very interesting time: the blossoming of the Talmud; rabbis of great renown wrote down precise explanations of how the law is to be observed."

Fr. Oleg then asked him,

"Tell me, what was it you did that so angered God that your temple was destroyed?"

"I know what you are hinting at," the rabbi said.

Fr. Oleg went on: "Well, if not that, then what?"

"I don't know," answered the rabbi.

The fact of the matter is that since the temple has been destroyed, we cannot speak of a coming of the true Messiah because five prophets—Malachi, Haggai, Zechariah, Daniel, and Ezekiel—speak of the Messiah's coming specifically to the second temple, which was built during the time of Zerubbabel; and so to try to say that the Messiah will come later is incorrect from the prophets' point of view. The Jews even have a sly interpretation by which they try to get around this: they say that the Messiah is sinless and therefore immortal, and that he was born during the time of the second temple, and the time of his coming is unknown. However, this does not work either, because the prophet Haggai says that He must come into His own temple: the second one, not the third. No matter where they turn they are at variance with the prophets.

## 88. For what reason was Leo Tolstoy excommunicated?

Leo Tolstoy was excommunicated because he rejected the fact that God is a person. He said that God is a sort of featureless power. He also did not believe in the immortality of the soul, and he blasphemed the most holy The-

otokos. He blasphemed the holy icons, did not believe in Christ's Resurrection from the dead, and rejected Jesus Christ's divinity. He consciously distorted the Gospel. Here is how he said we should read the Gospel: "Take a blue pencil and a red pencil; underline everything you like in red, and what you do not like underline in blue. Throw out everything that you underlined in blue, and leave the red." This is impudence, crudeness, and audacity toward God. He rejected the future judgment and retribution. Naturally, he is not a Christian, although he pretended to be one; and for this reason he is under ban of excommunication.

### 89. Why are we called Christians?

Why were we baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity but call ourselves Christians? When you come to church you will receive according to where your heart is. Grace depends on you: if your heart is open you will receive grace; if it is closed, then you will not. But as to why we call ourselves Christians when we were baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, that is because we were anointed by the Holy Spirit. The word "anointing" comes from the word "Christ." From Christ we received chrism, that is, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit anoints us and makes us partakers in Christ and God the Father, thus making us partakers in the Holy Trinity.

## 90. Why do people die unbaptized?

Let us define what a good person is. What are the criteria we have for goodness? What are the characteristics of good and evil? Keeping the Lord's commandments. How does the first commandment go? *I am the Lord thy God ... Thou shalt have none other gods before me* **(Deut. 5:6-7)**. The second one is: *Thou shalt not make thee any graven image ... Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them … I the Lord thy God am a jealous God* **(Deut. 5:8-9)**. The third one says: *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* **(Deut. 5:11)**. The fourth commandment: *Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God* **(Deut. 5:13-14)**. We have already named four commandments, and yet a "good person," does not keep them. Why do people perish who have not received holy baptism? What is the reason for an unbaptized person's death? Is the reason that he stole, killed, etc.? And if an unbaptized person lived by his conscience, perhaps he will be saved? This is purely a theoretical possibility, since centuries of experience have shown us that not a single person has ever acted strictly according to his conscience. The Bible says: *There is none righteous, no, not one* **(Rom. 3:10)**, and experience has shown us the same thing. Horatio, the great pagan poet, says, "I know a marvelous way; I know a good road; however, for some reason I do not take it."

Theoretically, there could be all sorts of possibilities if a person were able to do good without God. But if we are

speaking of the commandments, then, actually, God's commandments are what our conscience amounts to. The Ten Commandments are the minimum requirements of the conscience. Four of them require us to honor God. Imagine if a person violated 40% of the penal code, but obeyed the other 60%. Is that a good person? For instance, a person honors his parents, does not lie, and does not commit adultery; but at the same time he blasphemes God, is sacrilegious, honors idols, and does not honor the feasts of the Lord. God requires us to keep the commandments in the way that He told us, not in whatever way comes into my head, and not in the way that someone else told me, but in the way that God revealed. The Lord says: *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* **(Jn. 3:5)**. A person who does not believe in the Savior is already a bad person.

As for the Muslims, those who have read the Quran attentively have perhaps noticed one thing: the Quran was clearly not written by a person, but by a very clever and very evil spirit. After a Muslim's soul has left his body the devil is going to come up to him and say,

"You're mine!"

The Muslim will say,

"Why is that?"

The devil will ask him,

"Have you read the Quran? It says there that Jesus is the Word of God! Why didn't you follow Him?"

It is all done extremely cunningly. In the Quran there are things that are true mixed with things that are not.

That is why we have the strange result of people going forth to kill with the name of God on their lips. This is in no wise a normal situation. Moreover, this is happening not with ignoramuses but with people who have read the Quran carefully. This is happening specifically with those who know the Quran well. Why? Because this revelation was not given by God. At the same time, however, there are places in it that could, if given some thought, lead a person to God. Why did Satan do this? So that at the Last Judgment no one would be able to blame him. "I said that," he will say, "but the fact that they were deceived is their problem."

Even Muhammad, when he stands at God's Judgment, will not be able to tell God that the devil deceived him, because the spirit that came to him with revelations did not introduce himself even once. He did not say that he was the archangel Gabriel; he did not say that he was sent by God; Muhammad decided that on his own. This is true of Muhammad as well as of all the rest. Why is there such a gap in Islam's understanding? The Muslims are experiencing conflict between their hearts and their religion. Their hearts are better than their religion. Their religion's commandments are worse than what their conscience wants to allow. Their conscience tells them that it is not good to kill; Russian Muslims condemn acts of terrorism. There are even many Chechens who condemn acts of terrorism because their conscience tells them that it is wrong. The text, however, says that it is good. The result is a rift in the conscience. In other words, we need to test whether

something is from God or not. What is the basis for my belief? Why do I believe the way I do? A Christian must ask this question as well, and we have a test: the Lord said, *Though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him* **(Jn. 10:38)**. The Lord is not afraid of tests. In Islam, however, a person begins to suppress his conscience, saying: "No matter what is written there, I will act according to my conscience; but I will remain a Muslim because that is my tradition." In other words, the person consciously leaves the question of truth undecided; he ignores the question of truth. Or he may say, "Since it is written there, that means that it came from Allah, and I am not going to test whether or not it came from him." That is the first act of injustice. "And I will suppress my conscience. My conscience tells me not to kill, but I will; my conscience tells me not to hate, but I will because that is what is written in the book." In both cases he is sinning against truth and against God. It is this suppression of the conscience that is the most terrible thing. However, those Muslims who take their conscience seriously begin to search for the truth and find it. The Orthodox Church even has an icon named "The Synaxis of Saints Who Have Converted from Islam." These are people who were at one time Muslim but became great saints. There have been instances when muftis have recognized Christianity but were afraid to be baptized because the penalty for this in Islam is death. But Christ has plainly told us: *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul:*

*but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell* **(Mt. 10:28).**

The Jews rejected belief in a Redeemer, saying that they would fulfill the law themselves and that they did not need Christ. Both Muslims and Jews say that they can justify themselves before God on their own by their works. However, the Lord said that *by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight* **(Rom. 3:20).** And God says, "Then fulfill the entire Law! There are only 613 commandments: 248 positive commandments and 365 prohibitory ones. Then you will be saved." But who kept them? No one! No flesh was justified before God.

## 91. Why do people sin again after receiving Communion?

The Lord enters and acts in us to the extent to which we allow Him in ourselves. Whatever the degree to which we cooperate with Him, to that degree will He consume our passions. If we use God's grace and power to struggle against evil and overcome the passions, then the Lord's power manifests itself marvelously. If a person communes and thinks that he can live the way he did before, then Communion will simply burn him. Sin depends solely on a person's will. Without the person's will there is no sin. The Lord allows sin and lets your free will make its choice; it is not forced on anyone.

### 92. How did repentance occur in the Old Testament?

In the Old Testament a person had to bring a sacrifice, entreating God through the priests and prophets. In Jerusalem there was a temple and 18 priests who offered sacrifices, since sin is redeemed only by blood.

### 93. Does predetermination exist between God and man?

Every person's fate is decided by that person himself. God knows beforehand exactly who will be saved. Why beforehand? He is outside time and sees which person will be saved and which will not. He did not predetermine whom He would save and whom He would not. Naturally, God predetermined all people, but only for salvation; but He sees that there are some who do not want to avail themselves of this. God knows beforehand who will be saved and plans the world's fate accordingly. When the number of the saved, known to Him from the beginning, is fulfilled, God will accomplish the fate of all creation.

### 94. What is the marriage bed?

*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh* **(Gen. 2:24).** The husband and wife are a single whole. It is not mandatory, however, for one to become of one flesh with another. Monastics attain to the heavenly kingdom by giving

up a carnal, sexual life for the sake of God, for the sake of a higher love. They subjugate the lesser love by means of the higher love. And their union is of a higher kind than that of people who are married. As it is said, those who are married cling directly to their spouse. Monastics, however, cling to God; therefore their love is higher.

### 95. How is hell different from gehenna?

There is hell and there is gehenna: these are two different places. Hell is a Pre-trial Detention Center, and gehenna is the place of final punishment. There is also a broader description: *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched* **(Mk. 9:44, 46, 48)**, *there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* **(Mt. 8:12)**, *death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death* **(Rev. 20:14)**. These descriptions alone are enough. Imagine: fire, a worm that consumes you, eternal hopelessness, and death.

### 96. Who was it that acted immorally during the Civil War—the White Army or the Red?

That the White Army was cruel and killed without distinction is a lie, Soviet propaganda. Unfortunately, the Soviet authorities acted according to the principle that the more you lie, the more people will believe you. Goebbels was a pitiful imitation and an inept weakling in comparison with the propaganda of the Soviet regime. For instance, name

a church that was deliberately blown up by German troops. There are none. With regard to the Russians, however, we could name many churches; for instance the Lavra's Dormition cathedral, the bell-tower of the monastery of St. Joseph of Volotsk, and many others; these churches were blown up by the Red Army. As the Red Army was marching it blew up churches along the way, but blamed it all on the Germans.

But now everything has come to the surface. Or, for instance, there was the film about the bombing of Krakow, where the Germans allegedly tried to blow up Krakow, and the Red Army averted the bombing, freeing Krakow. It was somewhat the other way around. The Red Army actually blew up the royal palace of Krakow. It was all Red propaganda. During a war this is sometimes justified. There have been cases that were warranted, as when this is done for military purposes; but more often than not they blew things up out of hatred, out of malice toward God. But during the Civil War the White Army did nothing that even approached the atrocities that the Red Army committed. They did not execute lists of people; they did not publish lists of those they executed as the Red Army did; and there were not thousands being subjected to gruesome tortures. The Red Army described themselves in the films they made about the White Army. Naturally, the White Army conducted retaliatory operations and wiped out detachments of Red guerilla fighters. There were instances of immorality, but the White Army punished such acts, while the Red Army rewarded them.

### 97. Must we always obey the authorities?

*Obey them that have the rule over you* **(Heb. 13:17).** The apostle Paul said this in regard to the church authorities. If you wish to work at a certain factory and you do not have the means to take action against a certain superior, then be so kind as to work. If you do not wish to work there, then look for another job. But if you have the opportunity to contest a superior's decision with someone higher up, then by all means do so. If you are a Christian this does not mean that they should exploit you.

### 98. How does nationalism combine with Christianity?

The combination of nationalism with Christianity is an erroneous teaching. We may pray for Russia, but we may not pray to Russia itself. When an argument about nationalism starts, problems arise because of the terms. People understand the word "nationalism" to mean everything under the sun. When I say that nationalism cannot be combined with Christianity I understand the word "nationalism" the way an ordinary encyclopedia understands it. According to any encyclopedia this term has two definitions. The first is the idea of an exclusive role, of my nation's superiority over all other nations. A Christian would never say that we are better than others because we are Russian. The second type of nationalism mentioned in the encyclopedia is the assertion that a nation is the highest form of social organization.

A Christian would not agree with this either. The highest thing in the world is the Church.

Nationalism can be taken to mean other things as well, but that would no longer be the standard definition. In these instances one should choose a different word and use it for that meaning. However, we are talking in the Russian language about Russian nationalism; it is possible that in other languages nationalism has a different meaning. Patriotism is love of one's fatherland, and these feelings are natural. Love of one's nation is also a natural feeling and does not need a name. For instance, a person might like his native language, and that is normal. A person might like the culture in which he grew up, and that is normal as well. This is a simple, ordinary human state. When a person loves his mother there is no need to invent a term for it. There is a special love of children; I have a daughter, for instance, and I love her. This is not a bad quality: this is a natural human state.

### 99. What is ancestral sin?

*In sin did my mother conceive me* **(Ps. 51:5)**. This means that a person is born in the state of sin. In the Slavonic language, however, the translation is not quite correct. It should not be "gave birth," but "did my mother passionately desire me," as in the Greek. This refers to passionate desire at the moment of conception. At that very moment man falls under the influence of sin; in the original the word is in the singular: not "in sins," but "in sin." This sin is what

is known as ancestral sin; that is, the distortion of the will, senses, and mind, which is transmitted at the moment of conception. At the moment of conception a demon—in the form of the distorted will that finds it easier to do evil than good—settles in the person's heart and, sitting there, begins to produce a stream of wicked thoughts. The person is introduced to the realm of fantasy, which, while the person is spouting evil, continues to produce it.

Passionless conception does not happen, with the exception being the Theotokos, but she conceived without a husband. And the Theotokos herself was born with ancestral sin; that is why she said that she was also in need of salvation. There was a fountain of impurity in her as well—within her—therefore she was likewise in need of redemption. This state is called ancestral sin and is healed only by baptism. And the children born through in vitro fertilization (IVF)? That is a passionate conception as well because the person is born tainted by pride, since pride is present in those who use IVF; they consider themselves almost gods. Thus, this type of birth is also impure. Every birth is impure from its very beginning because it is always mixed with wickedness. The marriage bed is not sinful, but there is sin mixed into the very roots of human nature. If a nuclear warhead, for instance, or a piece of plutonium is placed at the source of a river, what will happen to the river? The entire river will be radioactive. Likewise, since the root has been damaged for all generations, then it is through conception that the infection is passed on.

### 100. What is the point of miracles?

The point of miracles is to show that God is with us, that God is active. We need miracles in order to remember that God cares for us every day, and that for God all things are possible. We need miracles so that we know that God has not abandoned us. This is the reason why miracles take place mainly where believers are in very difficult circumstances or where the gospel is being preached to unbelievers, so that the people might be assured that God is with us. We need not search for miracles, but we may and should ask for them if we need them. Therefore, Christians may and do ask for healings. After all, how many molebens for healing do we have? And at the Liturgy we ask all the time for God to involve Himself in our life. This is natural and normal. But to make a hobby of collecting miracles or to wait for a miracle for the sake of a miracle—that we must not do. For instance, some say they wish God would show them some miracle, but we should not do this; regarding this the Lord said, *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas* **(Mt. 12:39)**, that is, the sign of Christ's Resurrection from the dead; but there would be no miracles for the sake of miracles. However, a miracle for the sake of good—absolutely!

If you have taken ill, ask for healing, and you may certainly receive it; this is why we have the sacrament of unction. And as for the rest of it, if a person enters the kingdom of God then he enters it knowing God. If a person does not know God he will not enter. This is why people testify to

their knowledge of God. We must say: "I know that the Lord exists; I know His glory and power; I render Him honor and glory. I know that He is my Father through baptism, that He loves me, and that He cares for me. When I have some sort of trouble I ask Him, and He helps me." This in itself is a miracle. Here a Christian simply communes with God; there is no need for him to test God. For him this is a simple and natural process. This is why in the akathist to Hierarch Nicholas the Wonder-worker it says: "inexhaustible sea of miracles." And this is the way it really is: an inexhaustible sea of miracles that overflow the Church to this day. God the Father helps us and cares for us; He cares for us in natural and supernatural ways. This is done by one and the same God. For God there are no miracles whatsoever; but for us there are miracles. For God there are ordinary actions, and there are unordinary ones; but they are both one and the same thing: God's actions.

### 101. Explain Abraham's action toward his wife.

The point is that the Lord, despite Abraham's cowardice, preserved his wife inviolate. As we know, he was frightened by Pharaoh and gave him his wife. The Lord showed how He protects people in spite of their weakness and sins, but only if they are faithful to Him. That is the point. And on the other hand, it shows us the state of the Old Testament people who were filled with horror at the thought of death because they knew that after death hell awaited them. Abra-

ham also knew that he would go to hell and that the Lord would lead him out from it at some unknown time. For this reason he was terribly afraid of death, as were all the people of the Old Testament. But today people do not fear death, because they have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord. The resurrection of the flesh and the immortality of the soul await us. The soul was immortal before, as well, but now the soul's immortality is good; that is, we are able to be in paradise, which was not possible before.

### 102. How should "one star differeth from another star in glory" be interpreted?

*One star differeth from another star in glory* **(1 Cor. 15:41).** There are luminaries that have within themselves God as their source. There are people who follow God of their own accord, and there are people who follow those people to God. The people who themselves follow God are the sun, and those who follow them are the moon. Abraham was the sun: he followed God at a time when there was no one to show him the way.

### 103. Is it only Christians whom we have to help?

We strive to help everyone: the baptized and the unbaptized. We are obligated to feed the hungering Jew, clothe the naked Muslim, and give aid to the sectarians. We are obligated to do this because this is what the gospel teaches us.

## 104. In what way are the Catholics heretical?

An unbaptized person will perish because the evil spirit has not been cast out of his heart. But if a person confesses the Roman Catholic heresy, i.e., the false teaching on the Holy Spirit and the false teaching on the Pope of Rome's place in the Church, then the sin of heresy will eat away at his soul. Will fornicators who are Orthodox be saved? Will murderers who are Orthodox be saved? If they do not repent, they will not be saved. If they repent, then they will. Will Catholics be saved? They will be saved if they repent, since in the apostle Paul's list of sins it clearly places murder, heresy, sorcery, and adultery in the same category. These are the deadliest sins, which destroy people. If a person repents of them then, by all means, all is well; the Church recognizes Catholic baptism. In the case of the Catholics it is a matter of perishing on account of heresy. They teach wrongly concerning the Holy Spirit. They teach that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, as from a single source. According to their teaching the Holy Spirit is debased; it is played down before the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity. The Lord said that *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men ... neither in this world, neither in the world to come* **(Mt. 12:31-32)**. Furthermore, according to the Roman Catholic teaching the grace of the Holy Spirit—this uncreated gift that we receive in the sacraments—is a sort of created reality. They say that we become united not with God but with a certain reality that was fashioned, created. This is a false teaching about God, which impedes salvation.

Their attitude toward the Pope of Rome is a form of idolatry; that is, their treatment of the Roman bishop as the head of the entire Church, the infallible head of the Church. This is virtual deification of a person, imparting to a person divine qualities. This is inexcusable. This is idolatry.

### 105. In what way are the Jews delusional?

It is said that even the Jews are given the opportunity to be saved. Jews, apostates, and murderers may be healed if they say, "Blessed is He Who cometh in the name of the Lord," if they confess Christ at the moment of their death, and if they are faithful to Him. But if they do not confess Him and do not turn to Him, then no one will help them. This is the retribution for their evil deeds. The Jews reject the will of God; they do not want to obey it. They say, "We'll perform the formal customs and rites. And as for you, you leave me alone." Here is their logic: "Leave my soul alone. Don't touch me—I'm through with you." It is like this: "I went to the temple Saturday morning and evening. That's all. You and I are even. But to make you feel better I'll fast a little more. Just stay out of my heart."

### 106. Why was Khodorkovsky's spiritual father defrocked?

Khodorkovsky's spiritual father was defrocked for insubordination against the ruling bishop and for organizing meetings and demonstrations.

### 107. Why did the Hebrews practice circumcision?

The Hebrews practiced circumcision in accordance with God's commandment; God commanded that the Hebrews be circumcised. This was because God wanted His nation to be different from other nations. We are obligated to differ from other nations today as well: other nations fornicate, but we must be pure; other nations steal, but we must not; other nations bow down to statues and idols, but we must bow down to the one God. In this respect there must be a colossal difference. That is what circumcision meant: that a person had made a covenant with God for the express purpose of doing this very thing. Likewise we, being submerged in the water of holy baptism, bear on ourselves a sign of our covenant with God (the Cross of the Lord); this is a reminder to us of our obligations.

### 108. Why should we dress modestly?

Some people tell me that new converts for some reason come to church every week dressed in long skirts, and they ask me why this is necessary. Zeal in the beginning of a person's entry into the Church is something that is absolutely essential. If a person does not begin his spiritual life zealously, he will never end it well. It is simply indispensable, even when it comes to those details that seem unimportant, such as wearing a skirt. But actually it is not an altogether trivial thing: at times it can be very beneficial for young ladies, if they are habitually flirtatious, to dress in some worn-out

skirt; I am sure you will agree that this produces an entirely different feeling. Some find it useful to dress in loose, unfitted jackets for this very same reason: a person has been accustomed to wearing fine clothes. This in and of itself is not virtue: it is a method for overcoming one's passions. If we see it this way then, naturally, everything will be fine.

That being said, when we go to church we should try to dress nicely but not provocatively, because we must go to the house of God as if to a feast. But nevertheless, the outward, ritualistic side of the Church, which people ridicule today, has a real, spiritual significance. It is not about the clothes themselves, but about the heart of the person who dresses up for these reasons. When a person dresses like a peacock, that is one state of soul; and it is another state of soul when a person dresses simply. Eventually a person should arrive at a normal state of soul, when he will be indifferent to what he is wearing: if the clothes are clean—glory to God. Being a new convert has its advantages, but it must grow into wisdom; not lukewarmness, as many think, but into wisdom. One should not wear pants to church, but we are lenient with women in that regard. In Deuteronomy it forbids women to dress in men's clothing and men to dress in women's clothing: *The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God* **(Deut. 22:5).**

If a man came to church dressed as a woman he would be thrown out, and rightly so. Clothing must convey the difference in gender. I think that for our climate—and this is

my personal opinion—we should have Orthodox fashion designers. For the winter there should be an outfit made from pants and a skirt—both at once—so that no one freezes. This would be a marvelous solution. It would be very beautiful and remarkable. It would convey femininity, and on the other hand it would keep women from freezing in their pantyhose.

Turning aside to the left is lukewarmness. "We are not like those fanatics—we are forward-thinking people, so we know everything. Your prohibitions are all nonsense." But, as the apostle Paul said, you have knowledge, but because of this knowledge of yours your brother, for whom Christ died, is perishing. What answer will you give? You say you know that clothing is unimportant, and that you will go to church in pants as a form of demonstration. Fr. Andrei Kuraev explained that women's pants are permitted. Theoretically, women's pants convey the feminine nature, etc. But in reality, it causes temptation for the men or women in church. This is not good. It is a violation of the will of God. You are tempting those for whom Christ died, and this is wrong. It is an expression of enmity. It is a question of love or enmity towards one's neighbor.

### 109. Is the devil evil itself?

The devil is not by nature evil. There is no such thing as being evil by nature. The devil is an angel by nature, and it is not a bad thing to be an angel. Goodness is embedded

in man; it is natural. Evil is not connatural to man: goodness is, because man was created by the hands of God; and this is the very reason why there are people outside the Church who do good works but are not virtuous.

### 110. Explain the meaning of the Lord's wounds.

Christ's wounds will always be with the Lord. The wounds on His hands will always be open not because He is suffering now and will continue to suffer, but because it is a sign of His love for people. At present the wounds on the Lord's body are the wounds of sin, the wounds of those who have fallen away from the Church. Those who fall away from the Church inflict wounds on Christ's body. In the next life the Church will have neither stain nor spot. The Church was bought by the body and blood of Christ, but she herself will not bear on herself the Lord's wounds.

### 111. How should one behave during a church service?

If someone passes you a candle during the reading of the word of God, you should take it and stand silently. Why? So as not to become irritated during the reading and pass it on to the next person; so as not to disrupt the other people from listening to the word of God. It is as the age-old saying goes: "Do not repay evil with evil." Let the evil stop with you. After the Gospel reading is over, then, after the homily, pass it on. Times when we must not go anywhere are the Gospel and

homily, the Cherubic Hymn, and the period from the Symbol of Faith through "Holy things are for the holy!" We must spend this time either singing or in silence, without becoming distracted by anything earthly. And of course, when we approach Communion we must approach with fear of God and with love, recalling Christ the Savior's sufferings.

At the All-night Vigil, special moments of the service are the singing of "O Gentle Light," when we sing in praise of Jesus Christ the Savior, and the singing of "Vouchsafe, O Lord," when we pray to the Lord. The Six Psalms are also special: when six psalms are read and all the lights are put out. It is forbidden even to make the sign of the cross during the reading of these psalms. And it is said that no one dares either to cough or sneeze. On Mount Athos, for instance, if someone has a cold he leaves the church so as not to disturb the people by coughing. Naturally, there is also the Polyeleos and especially the Gospel, which is read by the priest. There is "More Honorable" and the Great Doxology, when we sing "Glory to God in the highest." These are special, important moments of the service when we should not walk about or do other things.

Frequently people leave after the anointing. However, only those who are very sick, have sick family at home, or have small children may leave after the anointing. Everyone else must stand until the end of the service. Incidentally, for those who leave before the end of the service: there is a biblical character who serves as the basis for this practice. There was a certain apostle who left the Mystical Supper early:

Judas Iscariot; he left to betray Christ. So, if you leave the service early without a respectful reason you are imitating Judas Iscariot.

And of course, cell phones must without fail be turned off before entering the church. But most outrageous of all is when someone's phone goes off during the service and the person starts a conversation. It is like being at an appointment with a government official and starting to talk on your phone in the middle of your conversation with him. It is stupidity; it would not go over well even there. Or when people race out of the church in order to talk on the phone. You came to the house of the Lord to visit God, you came to the Judge Who is going to be trying your case. What are you thinking of? What cell phone? What affairs? Leave your affairs at home. Nothing is going to hurt your affairs in three hours. On the day you die what good are your affairs going to be? Therefore, keep the fear of God in mind.

During "It Is Truly Meet" we may commemorate the living and the departed who are known to us; this is when we pray for them especially. When the hymn of the Theotokos begins we may commemorate our friends and relatives.

### 112. Why does God allow people who are going to perish to live?

The first reason is that God's goodness is more powerful than the unrighteousness of sinners. God gives the gift to man regardless of how he chooses to use it. The gift of

existence is more important than man's misuse of it. "Why does God shine both on the righteous and the sinners? So that on the day of judgment He may repay them for their ingratitude (St. Irenaeus of Lyons)."

The second reason is that God uses those who have refused to pursue His mercy as a means to other ends: for instance, as a scourge, a punishment for other sinners. God might use such people as a means of passing on genetic material, if their children are destined to become righteous. Sometimes God uses sinners as a visual aid, showing us what not to do.

According to the Bible there is a type of creature that is rebellious from its very conception: people. God says this very thing: *This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord* **(Is. 30:9)**. People do not simply ignore God's commandments: they angrily reject them. Baptism, repentance—these are unquestioning capitulation to God; so, how is salvation possible for those who are rebelling, who do not want to capitulate? It is not possible. The capitulatory state comes when a person hears the truth, when a person becomes more interested in the truth than his personal opinion. God will without fail send missionaries to those who find a desire to learn the truth. There are countless examples of people from all corners of the earth being led to Orthodoxy when they searched for God (the Truth).

God has said: *Both Jews and Gentiles ... they are all under sin* **(Rom. 3:9)** and that *by the deeds of the law there shall no*

*flesh be justified in His sight* **(Rom. 3:20)**. Humanity's favorite concept is the heresy of Pelagius: "Deliverance no one will give us, neither god, nor tsar, nor knight errant. Our freedom we will attain ourselves, by the strength of our own hand." God says to man: *Let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified* **(Is. 43:26)**. God says one thing, and we do the complete opposite; and we want to be rewarded for it. This is a manifestation of that same fierce, angry rebelliousness against God. One cannot even tell these people about Christ the Savior: it makes them very angry. Why? We are a rebellious race! People understand that they need to change, but they do not want to. This is the cause of resentment toward the Orthodox Church, toward the gospel of Christ. This is rebellion against the Creator.

### 113. What is the meaning of the Gospel saying "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine?" (Mt. 7:6)

The pearl is the faith, the Revelation of God, that has become ours. We may not reveal our faith to those who do not want to know the Lord. There are people who have a blasphemous attitude toward the faith, who do not want to learn the truth, who only want to mock it. It is categorically forbidden to tell such people about the mysteries of the faith. It is easy to pick them out: if during conversation a person makes fun of the faith, then we must end the conversation, at the same time telling him that God's judgement

awaits him if he does not repent. Many missionaries waste a great deal of time on useless conversations with sacrilegious, blasphemous people. That is a mistake.

### 114. How is one to pray correctly and unceasingly?

The Lord says: *Pray without ceasing* **(1 Thess. 5:17)** and *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking* **(Mt. 6:7)**. We need to pray unceasingly, calling always on the name of the Lord. "Much speaking" is when people start to exercise their artistic talents while standing before God instead of turning to God with a pure heart. "Much speaking" is also when people begin to explain to God how He needs to fulfill their petitions. "God, do this and this at exactly this time and in this manner."

### 115. How can we have revenge on someone for not wanting to repent?

If a person does not want to repent we should tell him that God is his judge. We must definitely "avenge" ourselves on such a person: our "revenge" is doing good works! The apostle Paul said: *If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head* **(Rom. 12:20)**. This is a Christian's "revenge." Holy Scripture even requires us to seek "revenge"—by doing good. Be-

cause if a person does not repent God will give him a much greater punishment. An unrepentant person will never receive mercy.

### 116. How does a martyr's prayer for his executioners manifest itself?

There have been martyrs who prayed for their executioners, and their prayers were heard; as, for example, when the Lord prayed for his executioners: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do* **(Lk. 23:34)**. This prayer manifested itself in that one of those who were crucifying Christ—Longinus the centurian—embraced Christianity and became a martyr for the name of the Lord. It is in this way that the Lord's prayer manifests ifself, and not in that God punished the executioners. Naturally, God will certainly punish those who did not repent. Who brought the Roman forces to Jerusalem? God the Son brought them, by His Father's will. Concerning this the Lord Himself said: *But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me* **(Lk. 19:27)**. The Lord Himself punished Israel for murder (those who did not repent); but His prayer was heard in that among the Jews there were those who repented. Every Jew who repented was saved not only in the next life but also did not perish in Jerusalem. The Lord led them out of the besieged city, and they were saved. This is how the prayers of the martyrs work.

The prayer of the protomartyr Stephen—*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge* **(Acts 7:60)**—manifested itself in that the future apostle Paul, who was guarding the coats of Stephen's executioners, embraced Christianity. Salvation is possible only provided there is faith and repentance, which lead to holy baptism; and martyrs' prayers manifest themselves in this very way: some torturers did repent. An unrepentant torturer, however, does not receive anything good from God: he receives from God recompense for his evil deeds. In heaven do martyrs pray for their torturers? Yes, their prayer is: *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* **(Rev. 6:10)**. This is a prayer for the speedy punishment of their torturers. Many say that this is unchristian, that Christians must forgive everyone, even unrepentant sinners. This is delusion; this is the mindset of someone who has never been threatened by death—either his own or that of a loved one—when the murderer considers his actions to be entirely praiseworthy.

Nowhere in the Bible does it talk about all-inclusive forgiveness; it does not say that God is all-forgiving. He forgives only those who repent. And those who do not repent will receive according to their deeds. And as for the heretic Leo Tolstoy's idea that God forgives all regardless of their wishes—that is delusion which is unsupported either by Holy Scripture or the works of the Holy Fathers. Our duty is to not have any personal enmity toward another person. Forgiveness presupposes the settlement of people's personal interrelations. We may not be vindictive and seek our own

revenge (in its usual sense) because vengeance is God's privilege: *Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord* **(Rom. 12:19).** Man does not have the right to seek revenge; neither does he have the right to call evil good, either in regard to himself or to another person. A terrible, deceitful, and sinful thing is being offered to us when people tell us that we should be understanding of every person and try to put ourselves in the other's place. We must not put ourselves in the place of evildoers. By putting ourselves in an evildoer's place we risk making our next step one that takes us into that place, meaning the sin. That is a demonic attitude. If you turn a blind eye to another person's shamefulness, it will be very easy for you to do those very things. God does not forgive everyone, but only those who ask for forgiveness; otherwise there would be no Last Judgment. We must be like God in everything: *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect* **(Mt. 5:48).** As God does, so must we.

### 117. Are we for God, or is God for us?

God granted us to perpetually grow in knowledge of Him. God created us, and not we Him. *So we Thy people and sheep of Thy pasture will give Thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth Thy praise to all generations* **(Ps. 79:13).** God is the Lord, and we are His creation. God is the Father, and we are His people. Therefore, we are for God, and not God for us. The Lord created the whole world for Himself. Christ the God-man is the measure of all things, and not man.

## 118. Do we punish ourselves, or does God punish us?

St. Honoratus of Arles said that there are two hells: an upper and a lower. The upper hell is the earth, and, well, we know about the lower one. What is more, the upper hell is worse because it produces the lower. The Lord says: *Walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow* **(Is. 50:11)**. This does not indicate that punishment is arbitrary or that it is some kind of karma: it is punishment by the hand of God. St. Basil the Great says that when there is a war, a huge earthquake, or a catastrophe of some sort, many say that it was a chance occurrence, for they do not see the powerful hand of God behind these things. But when the Last Judgment comes, all people will realize that God was behind everything, repaying sinners for their evil deeds.

Holy Scripture says plainly that there has not been a single punishment that has occurred by chance. The punishment is concealed in the evil itself, but it does not happen automatically: it happens by God's direct order. There are people who do evil and yet live to be a hundred without receiving any punishment here on earth. If sins were repaid automatically then such people would be punished immediately; but God intentionally postponed their punishment. Where does God prove to be more severe: in the Old Testament or the New? In the New Testament! In the Old Testament God was softer: He punished sinners with physical

death only, while in the New Testament the punishment is fiery gehenna. Which is better: to suffer once when your head is cut off or to suffer eternally in fire? Eternity is of course the more terrifying. This is why St. John Chrysostom says that the more you are given, the more will be required of you.

### 119. On how many people did the Holy Spirit descend on the day of Pentecost?

St. John Chrysostom writes that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on 120 people. It is said that the names numbered around 120.

### 120. Why is the loss of a fetus in utero not equivalent to murder?

*If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine* **(Ex. 21:22)**. They saw a difference between a developed fetus and an undeveloped one. If what came out of the woman was a developed fetus, then the person was seen as guilty of murder; if it was undeveloped, then he was not. Why this difference? The answer is very simple. Where is the assurance that the woman was pregnant? Maybe she was trying to convict an enemy of hers.

### 121. What does the word “mission” signify?

“Mission” is the proclamation of the unsullied holy gospel to those people who are outside the Orthodox Church.

### 122. How does missionary work differ from catechesis?

Missionary work is done among those who are unbaptized: Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and others. Catechesis is for those who are baptized but unacquainted with the Church, who count themselves Orthodox.

### 123. Why is missionary work necessary?

In order to save those around us. We want people who are in darkness to find the light; we want those in delusion to find the truth. We are the given the fullness of truth; we know perfect truth. *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness* **(1 Jn. 5:19)**.

### 124. What reward does a missionary receive?

A missionary is a collector; he receives the reward appropriate to the lifestyle he leads: either 30-fold, 60-fold, or 100-fold, depending on whether he is married, a widower, or a virgin. He also receives the reward due a missionary, which is no less than 100-fold, and sometimes more. And

those who are persecuted for the name of the Lord will receive another reward. God said: *Them that honour Me I will honour* **(1 Sam. 2:30).**

### 125. Whom is it useless to missionize?

No one, initially. Everyone should be missionized. However, if a person is indifferent to the truth as such, if he is not interested in what things actually are, then essentially it is useless to preach to him. The message cannot reach a person who has blocked himself off from God by his evil will.

### 126. What is the spiritual significance of missionary work?

A missionary comes into contact with three worlds simultaneously: with the world of God, in Whose name he is acting; with the world of people, who possess free will, where he sees hidden both undreamed-of evil and also undreamed-of good; and the world of the evil spirits who fight against him in a manner that is most real. Thus, the missionary is on the edge of three worlds; it is an in-between state. Monastics are the Orthodox special forces, and the missionaries are the infiltrators: they work beyond the Church's borders to prepare for the attack. Missionary work is an extremely dangerous but also extremely glorious thing.

### 127. What is natural Revelation?

The natural Revelation of God is what we can learn by observing nature. It is what we can learn from the workings of God's providence in history, through the examination of creation. The following words could be seen as the key text regarding knowledge of God as a result of observation: *Surely vain are all men by nature, who are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things that are seen know Him that is: neither by considering the works did they acknowledge the workmaster; But deemed either fire, or wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the violent water, or the lights of heaven, to be the gods which govern the world. With whose beauty if they being delighted took them to be gods; let them know how much better the Lord of them is: for the first author of beauty hath created them. But if they were astonished at their power and virtue, let them understand by them, how much mightier He is that made them. For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the maker of them is seen* **(Wis. 13:1-5)**. These lines tell us about the natural Revelation that exists in this world.

### 128. Is science objective?

No. First of all, science cannot do anything to the past. The past is not subject to experiment: no one can perform an experiment on Napolean Bonaparte, for example. Secondly, there are all those things outside the sphere of sci-

ence that are impossible to test. Thirdly, science is unable to describe and evaluate irreproducible events. One-time events are outside the sphere of science.

### 129. Is a scientific picture of the world possible?

No, it is impossible. This is first of all because of the limited nature of science's knowledge; this limitedness makes it impossible to create a complete picture of the world. Secondly (and this is the main reason), it is because the very paradigm of science—that is, what allows science to work, what makes it possible for us to think and construct hypotheses and theories—is unscientific; it was introduced, as the saying goes, by hand.

### 130. What are the causes of science's falsity?

1) Pride and vainglory. 2) Love of power and sensuality. 3) Lust for knowledge from Satan, that is, attempting to arrange the entire world to suit one's purposes, to become a god without God. 4) The main reason: ingratitude. The apostle says: *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened* **(Rom. 1:21).** Unwillingness to glorify God gives rise to pride, which in turn gives rise to egoism, which gives rise to false science and, as a matter of fact, every false worldview.

### 131. How can one disprove the myth about the supremacy of scholarship?

Man cannot be the criterion for truth due to his knowledge's limited nature. It is very useful to know examples of false scientific theories that were at one time generally accepted: the caloric theory, the fluid theories, the theory of the four elements, the aether theory, and others.

### 132. What is supernatural Revelation?

God Himself revealed Himself to us. Never and under no conditions could we ever have been able to comprehend Him. For this very reason supernatural Revelation must be understood in a supernatural manner. As the apostle Peter says concerning this: *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* **(2 Pet. 1:19-21).**

### 133. What does God reveal in prophecies?

God reveals His will. There are prophecies about the future and there are prophecies about the present: *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one un-*

*learned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth* **(1 Cor. 14:24-25)**. There are also prophecies about the past, when a person knows and sees things that no one has seen.

### 134. What are the forms of divine Revelation?

Divine Revelation is given in two forms. The first is Holy Tradition, the most ancient form of Revelation, that which was handed down by word of mouth by men filled with the Holy Spirit: *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle* **(2 Thess. 2:15)**. The second is Holy Scripture (the Old and New Testaments). The Bible is the highest established part of Holy Tradition.

### 135. Which is the true faith?

The true faith proceeds from the true God. The true God is the One Who created the universe. We as Christians believe that only faith in the true God is able to save. As God said through the prophet Jeremiah: *But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens* **(Jer. 10:10-11)**. Any-

one who bows down to someone other than the Creator of heaven and earth is acting foolishly. A person lives according to his beliefs. A person who believes in evil cannot be good. His concept of what is good is compromised.

### 136. How does distortion of the faith manifest itself?

For the apostle Paul distortion of the faith is ungodliness, not rendering God honor, departure from the truth, and the destruction of faith. *Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some* **(2 Tim. 2:16-18).**

### 137. Are there people who are unable to know God?

The apostle has said clearly that there are no such people. *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile*

*and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another* **(Rom. 1:18-24).**

### 138. What is the main thing God requires of us?

The main thing, the most important thing in the entire universe, is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. *Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent"* **(Jn. 6:28-29).** If a person does not want to do this he seals his own doom, he throws away his salvation. Thus, everyone who does not believe in Jesus Christ is already condemned, because he has rejected the only way to salvation.

### 139. What does faith reveal?

Access to the intellect of God. Access to the power of God. Access to the heart of God. Access to direct communion with God. Faith is omnipotent, but faith on its own does not save. It saves in that it opens up access to the Omnipotent God. The root of salvation is in God, to Whom faith unites us. Faith is an instrument for knowledge of God, a place in which God operates, but not God Himself.

### 140. Is God material?

No, God is not material. God is ouside space, outside time, outside matter, and outside energy. He is different: He is a spirit. It is logical: a spirit by definition is an immaterial being. Immateriality means that God has no form, color, taste, odor, or volume. He does not move from place to place. He has no weight. He cannot be measured by any device.

### 141. From whom did God originate?

Unlike people, God has life within His very Self. He is the source of life. The Son (Christ) likewise has life within His very Self. The Father gave Him this in birth, not as a gift, but in birth. *For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself* **(Jn. 5:26)**.

### 142. Where in the Bible is the Most Holy Trinity mentioned?

The Bible speaks about the actions of the Most Holy Trinity throughout the entire history **(Gen. 1:1-25)**. We read "said," "made," "called"—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We see one action carried out by three Persons. It is the same thing when we talk about the creation of man; God's plurality is mentioned directly: *Then God said, "Let Us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the*

*sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground"* **(Gen. 1:26)**. This verse speaks about God's plurality.

### 143. How can we prove Jesus Christ's divinity?

God cannot be without the Son, and the Son is *the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being* **(Heb. 1:3)**. The Son is the image of God's person (hypostasis). That is why Christ says: *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me* **(Jn. 14:6)**. *Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father ... I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me* **(Jn. 14:9-10)**.

### 144. Is the Holy Spirit God?

Yes, He is. *But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God* **(Acts 5:3-4)**.

### 145. What are the errors in the theory of emanation?

What are emanations? Discharge! It appears that God involuntarily produces of Himself something that has the same nature. This suggests that God is not perfect, since He

cannot control Himself; God is not good, since there is evil in the world; God is not a person, or is a corrupted person, since He has no self-control. We are approaching sheer pantheism.

### 146. What are the errors in the theory of the uncreatedness of the world?

This theory, according to which the world is eternal, came into being even before the appearance of man. The theory that the world is uncreated was thought up by a very wise and very powerful being by the name of Lucifer, in order to justify his own personal rebellion.

### 147. In what way is the theory of deism invalid?

The first synthesis of atheism and belief in the Creator received the name deism. This is the assertion that God created the world like a clock and left. God is a clockmaker. Christians have asked the question: and what if the parts of the mechanism go and break? The clockmaker would have to interfere, would he not?

### 148. What are the errors in the theory of uniformism?

Uniformism is the assertion that the laws of nature have always been the same and that all the processes have occurred exactly as they do now (at the same speed). But first

of all, who said that the laws are always the same? This is faith, and faith is based on the fact that God cannot alter His words. Creation is completed, but God can alter the speed of a process. Secondly, who said that the speed of a process is always the same? Where did we get such information? The principle of uniformism contradicts known facts! The assertion that all processes occurred at the same speed does not withstand any sort of criticism.

### 149. What are the errors in the theory of inflation?

This theory implies that before the big bang there were forces of gravitational repulsion at work that were so powerful that they built the speed up to a few hundred thousand times the speed of light. This contradicts all known theories, but they say that conditions were different then; however, no one has ever seen those conditions. And the mathematics of this theory do not add up if things had happened any differently. These are things that are deliberately unverifiable.

### 150. How can we disprove the theory that man descended from apes?

The Bible purposely emphasizes the dissimilarity between man and animals, so that man will not attempt to regard the animals as his ancestors: *And Adam gave names to*

*all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him* **(Gen. 2:20)**. Calling animals one's ancestors is an ancient pagan delusion, where people considered various totems to be their ancestors.

### 151. Where does false doctrine come from?

After the Fall, man's reason became diseased, and this disease is getting worse. This is why a person, though he knows, prefers not to know. This is how paganism originates: a person has knowledge but begins to distort it. All modern heresies are of this very same nature.

### 152. What are the reasons for sickness?

Sickness has three reasons.

1) Punishment for sins. *Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee* **(Jn. 5:14)**.
2) Demonstration of the Lord's power. *And his disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him* **(Jn. 9:2-3)**. *And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who*

*maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?* **(Ex. 4:11).**

3) Man's salvation. Here we may quote the entire book of Job the Long-suffering. Here God teaches man the way a trainer might. This is not cruel, since it is short-lived and is necessary for our good and our salvation.

### 153. What evidence is there in Holy Scripture that Jesus was sent by the God of the Old Testament?

In the New Testament there are 176 references to the Old Testament. The God of the Old Testament foretold the appearance of the Son of God. The Lord Himself said: *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me* **(Jn. 5:45-46).**

### 154. Who governs the fates of the nations?

The fates of the nations are in the nations' hands. God says that for every nation there is a sort of cup of iniquity. This cup is filled by the nation's evil deeds. The people have a sort of collective responsibility. Nations have their own traditions, and if a nation does not live in God these traditions become worse and worse. The people that are separated from God begin to decline; evil eats away at their

souls. God says: *For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full* **(Gen. 15:16)**; that is, the nations' fates are in the nations' hands, in the hands of their iniquity, and consequently in the hands of God. God looks at the extent of their iniquities and either destroys the nation or preserves it.

### 155. Is there continuity between the Old Testament and the New?

In the Old Testament there are 33 references to episodes from the Savior's life (this is the most modest number: the Old Testament contains information regarding 50 episodes, as well as another 80), and the New Testament contains 276 quotes from the Old Testament; moreover, 272 of them correspond with the Septuagint, while 4 of them correspond with the Hebrew text.

### 156. Why does God need sacrifice?

Man needed to be delivered from the devil's grasp; sin was being committed against God. God was angry because man was violating His commandments. Does God require the blood of the Son of God? In the Bible there is the image of marriage: a man takes a woman to wife and takes on all her debts. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Saviour of the*

*body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish* **(Eph. 5:22-27).**

### 157. For whom did Christ suffer?

For all people. *For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins* **(Mt. 26:28).** It is poured out for many: as an opportunity for all, as a reality for many. Those who did not want to accept this sacrifice will have to answer for their actions themselves. The baptized perish because of their sins only. The unbaptized who heard the gospel and rejected it will have to answer for that as well.

### 158. Does reincarnation exist?

No, reincarnation does not exist. This is one of the deadliest snares of the devil, who in order to destroy a person suggests to him that one may spend this life in sin and clean up one's act in the next. But it is a lie. *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment* **(Heb. 9:27).**

### 159. What is the purpose of the olympic games?

Originally the olympic games were part of a pagan religious cult. The goal of the olympic games was to support the spirits, their heroes; to feed them with the energy emanating from the sportsmen. And the heroes were to give this energy back and support humanity.

### 160. Where did Christ go right after His death?

Holy Scripture says clearly that right after His death the Lord descended to hell. After Christ's descent into hell the following events unfold.

1) Satan does not want to allow Christ into hell.
2) Christ enters hell in power and despoils it. The gates of hell crumble and fall. Their fall causes an earthquake on the earth. This is described in detail in psalm 107: *Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: Therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!* **(Ps. 107: 10-16).**

3) The angels bring Satan before Christ.
4) A dialogue between Christ and Satan. Christ asks him by what right he dared stretch out his hand to Christ: He did not commit any sin. For this Satan is deprived of everything.
5) Christ binds Satan with manacles of eternal darkness and casts him into the underground for a thousand years.
6) Christ speaks to the dead with His animate mouth and they awaken.
7) Christ wakes the righteous from sleep and takes with Him into the heavenly kingdom all those who were not idolaters and who lived according to their conscience.
8) He leads Adam and Eve by the hand out of the very depths of hell, saying to Adam: "Why did you run so far from Me?"
9) He resurrects the righteous. According to tradition, among those resurrected were Melchizedek, Job, Prophet Daniel, the three youths, Symeon the God-receiver and his two sons. The Lord resurrected them so that they would tell those on earth about His victory over death. Following their preaching they die for a second time on the day of the Ascension (so as to enter paradise with the Lord). The resurrection of the righteous is confirmed by the evangelist Matthew: *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which*

*slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many* **(Mt. 27:52-53).**

### 161. Was anyone in the Old Testament saved before Christ descended into hell?

No, all people went to hell. Even the Old Testament righteous and the prophets went to hell after their death. The antediluvian people, just as it is now, could either be saved or perish. After Christ's descent into hell those who entered the kingdom of heaven were those who repented during their lives, worshiped the One God, and who desired to live according to the commandments (to act according to their conscience).

### 162. Why was Jesus Christ's body incorrupt?

Because of the God-man's hypostatic unity death was unable to destroy it. At the moment of Christ's death His soul separated from His body, but since divinity is indivisible, through His divinity the connection between His soul and body was preserved. At the moment of the Resurrection the third barrier between God and men was broken down (the barrier of nature was broken down by the Incarnation; the barrier of sin was broken down on the Cross; the barrier of death was broken down by the Resurrection). The

significance of Christ's Resurrection is described in detail in 1 Corinthians **(1 Cor. 15:1-58).**

### 163. Why did Christ arise on the first day of the week?

Christ arises on the first day of the week because it is the beginning of a new world. On the very same day that God created the world, He begets it anew through Christ. Because Christ is that very same God. This is the same Jesus Who stretched out the heavens at the time of creation; it is He Who renews the world on the very same day. The transfiguration of the world began on the very same day that it appeared.

### 164. Why was Christ crucified on a Friday?

Because man was created on this day. The animals were created in the morning and man in the afternoon. At the same time of day that man was created, Christ was crucified on the Cross (12:00 p.m.). It was also on a Friday that Adam and Eve were banished from paradise—at 3:00 p.m.

### 165. Why did Jesus lie in the tomb on Saturday?

Because it is the day of rest. The fact that the days of creation and the days of redemption are identical indicates the identity of the One Who accomplished them.

### 166. Why is it not known at what point in time Christ arose?

The eighth day of creation is the entry of the world into eternity, and eternity is not circumscribed by time. Therefore, the moment of the Resurrection remains secret and is not described by anyone. Even the angels did not see Jesus rise from the dead; He sent the angel after He was already risen in body. And from this moment a new world begins. Christ arose on the day when the sheaves of the new harvest were offered; He is the first-born of the dead. The harvest-time offering began on Passover and ended on the day of Pentecost.

### 167. What is the Church?

The Old Testament equivalent "kahal" means "an assembly of those who were called together." The word "church" is used not just to describe the Christian Church, nor is it used solely in the Old Testament sense: to describe the Jewish place of assembly.

The Church is *His body* [Christ's] **(Eph. 1:22-23).**

The Church is the *pillar and ground of the truth* **(1 Tim. 3:15).**

The Church is the place of salvation **(Acts 2:47).**

The Church is guided by the Holy Spirit **(Acts 20:28).**

The Church is the bride of Christ **(Eph. 5:29-32).**

The Church is the nation of God's New Testament **(1 Pet. 2:10).**

The Church is the new Israel **(Gal. 6:16).**
Christ is *the head of the Church* **(Eph. 5:23).**
Christ died for the Church **(Eph. 5:25).**

### 168. How many times is the word "church" used in the New Testament?

The word "church" is used 126 times in the New Testament.

### 169. What obedience did God give to Prophet Hosea?

God gave Hosea an interesting commandment: He commanded him to marry a prostitute. They had two children. God commanded that one be named "Not My People" and the other "Unpardoned." In this way God revealed that Israel was betraying Him and sinning against Him. And then He said that He would name Unpardoned "Pardoned" and would name Not My People "My People." This was a sign that God would change the world and that the unpardoned people of darkness, the people of God's damnation and wrath, would become the children and people of God.

### 170. What is the Church's logic regarding salvation?

Unity in truth. Apostolic revelation is the prerequisite for unity, and it is this very unity that the Lord demands.

The unity of Christians in truth is the prerequisite for their unity. When Christians abide in unity of love and unity of faith, the world is transformed. This is the best missionary strategy. *That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me* **(Jn. 17:21-23).**

### 171. What is a sacrament?

In Greek the word for sacrament is "mystery." This word has several different meanings: *The mystery of the Lord is unto those who fear Him, and His covenant He makes manifest unto them* **(Ps. 25:14).** Here we see a direct connection between the mystery of the Lord and the mystery of the covenant between God and people. "The mystery of God" is what we call the mystery of His actions in this world, when He reveals His power in the universe. Therefore the Orthodox Church recognizes only one mystery: the Incarnation. *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory* **(1 Tim. 3:16).**

### 172. What must precede baptism?

Baptism must always be preceded by repentance. Repentance is freedom from the power of the devil. *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call* **(Acts 2:38-39).** Submersion in water is essential, as well as calling on the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism is performed by the apostles' successors (under normal circumstances). Also, there needs to be belief in God the Father, belief in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and belief in the Holy Spirit.

### 173. What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

We become partakers of the Holy Spirit **(Heb. 6:4).**

The Holy Spirit seals us **(Eph. 4:30).**

We become a temple of the Spirit that is in us **(1 Cor. 6:19).**

We abound in hope through the Holy Spirit **(Rom. 15:13).**

The Holy Spirit is the pledge of our salvation **(2 Cor. 1:21-22).**

Our own personal Pentecost.

The mystery of the future age **(Rom. 8:9-16).**

### 174. What does chrismation impart?

The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in one's heart **(Rom. 8:9)**

The Spirit brings Christ into us, and Christ brings God the Father **(Rom. 8:10).**

The gift of chrismation is connected to the future resurrection **(Rom. 8:11).**

Adoption **(Rom. 8:14).**

### 175. What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit?

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance* **(Gal. 5:22-23).**

### 176. What does chrism consist of in the Orthodox Church?

Holy chrism was passed down to us by the apostles. Every year newly sanctified chrism is added to an alabastron—a vessel with sanctified chrism, preserved by the Church since apostolic times—and into the fresh chrism is added chrism from the previous year. There are currently 33 ingredients used in the preparation of chrism. The basic ingredients are olive oil, white and red wine, various oils, and incense.

### 177. How many realities does Christ's body have?

Christ's body has three realities: a historical body, which was nailed to the Cross; the body of Communion, and the Church. These realities are not different but the same. The real, historical body of Christ, to which Mary gave birth and which was crucified, is given in Communion. And the people who commune of the real body become a single whole with Christ.

### 178. What is Communion and why do we need to commune?

Communion is a sacrament in which we eat the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine. Communion is the sacrifice of propitiation, the sacrifice of thanksgiving, the sacrifice of cleansing. We need to commune in order to be united with God and have eternal life. *For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones* **(Eph. 5:30)**.

### 179. Which biblical texts speak of the Eucharist?

All four evangelists speak about Communion **(Mt. 26:18-30; Mk. 14:17-26; Lk. 22:11-30; Jn. 6:24-58)**. Many sections in Acts speak about Communion, beginning with the second chapter. Communion is also discussed in the tenth and eleventh chapters of 1 Corinthians, as well as in Hebrews.

### 180. Where should one look for Christ today?

In Holy Scripture and in the broken Bread—Communion: *And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight* **(Lk. 24:30-31).** The Lord became invisible to show where we are to look for Him. We look for Christ when we celebrate the Eucharist: in Scripture and in the broken Bread.

### 181. Was it possible to receive full remission of sins in the Old Testament?

No, it was not. In the Old Testament one could receive remission of sins, but only certain ones: those that were committed unintentionally; these were remitted by offering a sacrifice. It was impossible in the Old Testament to be freed from mortal sins: murder, adultery, etc. According to the Law of Moses the only way to be exonerated was through the death penalty.

### 182. How many stages are there in the Christian sacrament of repentance?

The Christian sacrament of repentance consists of two stages. The first is repentance itself; a person needs to repent, to change his desires, thoughts, and mindset.

This is not enough, however. The second stage is his forgiveness from God. Repentance consists of four actions: repentance—sorrow over the sin committed; a change in mindset—rejecting the practice of justifying one's sins; receiving absolution at confession; and the doing of a good deed to oppose the evil deed committed through the sin.

### 183. Which sins are unforgiveable?

There is one text in the Gospel that speaks about sins being unforgiven: *Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come* **(Mt. 12:31-32)**.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit:

1) Conscious resistance to the Truth. This would be, for instance, the conscious rejection of God's miracles or the assertion that God's miracles are the result of a natural process (speaking out against the holy fire, the creation of the world from nothing, etc.).
2) Rejection of God's mercy. This is despair of salvation, a person saying "God will never forgive me." This is despair that amounts to suicide.

3) Refusal to make confession, claiming that God will forgive one regardless. The humanists, for example, would say, "God will forgive: that is His job."

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is these three things only. In all three cases a person is deprived of the opportunity to repent. There are currently those who say that any conscious sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Not true! Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is only the three points mentioned above.

### 184. Where in the Old Testament is priesthood mentioned for the first time?

The sacrament of priesthood is one of the key sacraments of the Orthodox Church. The word "priest" ("hiereus" in Greek; "kohen" in Hebrew) is first mentioned in the book of Genesis: *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God* **(Gen. 14:18)**.

### 185. What is a priest's main task?

The main task of the priest is to offer sacrifice. Where there is no sacrifice there is no priesthood. *For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law* **(Heb. 8:3-4)**.

### 186. What is the main task of the bishops?

The bishops' straightforward task is to guard the Church from false doctrine and to not be avaricious: *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. ... I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel* **(Acts 20:29-31, 33).**

### 187. Where in Holy Scripture does it speak of the tollhouses?

After death the soul finds itself in the air, which is ruled by the spirits of wickedness in high places: *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us* **(Eph. 2:1-4).** They are also described by the apostle Peter **(1 Pet. 5:8-9)** and in other places.

### 188. What is hell?

According to the Bible, after the end of the world there will be no hell. Hell is the Pre-trial Detention Center. After the end of the world hell will be replaced by fiery gehenna. *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death* **(Rev. 20:13-14).**

### 189. Why is the Church unable to pray for the unbaptized?

They have not received remission of their sins from God in the sacrament of baptism: *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* **(Jn. 3:5).**

### 190. Why does there have to be an end of the world?

The end of the world is the resurrection of the dead through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. *When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats* **(Mt. 25:31-32).** There are many similar passages in Scripture, for instance chapter eight of the Gospel of Mark **(Mk. 8:38).**

People will make a final choice between good and evil. The coming of the antichrist is not the end of the world: it is only one of the signs of the end of the world, and not even the main one at that. Scripture speaks about a certain "fullness of times." *He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ* **(Eph. 1:9-10).**

### 191. What are the signs of the end of the world?

1) The theory concerning the number of the righteous—that the number of fallen angels needs to be compensated. This theory is not founded on Holy Scripture. Its drawback is the fact that angels and men serve God in ways that are individual and different. Another aspect is the number of the fallen angels; according to John the Theologian's Revelation one third of the angels fell. According to the interpretation of St. Cyril of Jerusalem the ratio of angels to men is 99:1. We have to accept that the number of the righteous is unknown, since the Bible does not mention this.
2) The proclamation of the word of God to all nations. *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come* **(Mt. 24:14)**; *And the gospel must first be published among all nations* **(Mk. 13:10).** It does not say that the gospel will be accepted by everyone: it says only that it will be preached to all nations.

Which faith is salvific? *Neither pray I for these* [the apostles] *alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word* **(Jn. 17:20)**. From the Bible we see that the proclamation of the gospel does not involve simply distributing the text and telling about Christ; rather, it entails the proclamation of the apostolic faith. The opinion of Seraphim Rose and Ignatius Brianchaninov that the only true preaching of the gospel is the Orthodox preaching is confirmed by the gospel. The preaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Protestants, and the Catholics is not the proclamation of the gospel. All those who have distorted the apostolic faith do not preach the gospel but heresy. The preaching of the gospel is one of the main signs of the end of the world.

3) The disappearance of national borders. National borders appeared as a result of the Tower of Babel. God did this so that evil would not spread. These borders will be in use until the gospel has been proclaimed to all nations. Towards the end of the world the national borders will disappear.
4) The appearances of false christs. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many* **(Mt. 24:4-5)**.
5) Wars and rumors of war. *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet* **(Mt. 24:6)**. Before the 20th century, battles were between professional armies: nation did not war against nation. The

grandiose wars of the 20th century would have been impossible without nationwide mobilization.

6) Famine, earthquakes, diseases. *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows* **(Mt. 24:7-8).**
7) The merciless persecution of Christianity. *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake* **(Mt. 24:9).** Scripture prophesies about two waves of great persecution. The first wave is comprised of ten great persecutions, beginning with Nero and ending with Diocletian. After that there is a lull, although localized persecutions against Christians have always existed and will always exist (until the second coming of Christ). The second wave of persecutions will take place during the end times: all Christian nations will be obliterated, as well as all missionary societies and the institution of the Orthodox Church. The Church will remain, church services will be held, but there will be no patriarchates; there will simply be bishops, priests, and lay people who are faithful to God.
8) The departure of many from Christianity. *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another* **(Mt. 24:10).**
9) The appearance of a multitude of false prophets. *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many* **(Mt. 24:11).** Before the end of the world there will be a massive revival of occultism.

10) The cooling of love. *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved* **(Mt. 24:12-13)**. This is what is most terrifying.
11) The reconstruction of the third temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day* **(Mt. 24:15-20)**.
12) Great sorrow, such as never has been felt before. *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be* **(Mt. 24:21)**.
13) A shortening of days. *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened* **(Mt. 24:22)**.
14) The coming of the antichrist. *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you* **(Mt. 24:23-25)**. The Lord uses the plural because the an-

tichrist will not be the only one, but he will be the last. The deception will be achieved not by technique but by magic.

15) The second coming of Christ to earth. *Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other* **(Mt. 24:26-31)**. The sign of the Son of man is the Cross. The tribes of the earth are the nations that did not accept Christ. The elect gathered by the angels are the Christians.

### 192. Will the second coming of Christ be evident to everyone?

Yes, it will. *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heav-*

*ens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other* **(Mt. 24:29-31).**

### 193. Why is it Christ in particular Who will judge people?

There are two reasons: because He is the Son of man and because He is the Lord. The Son of man will judge so that no one will be able to say, "You gave us the Law but didn't fulfill it Yourself." Christ will say "Look at My hands—there are wounds on them! I lived your life; this is why I have the right to judge you both as God Who created you and as a man who has fulfilled the Law. Thus I possess the right to judge both according to creation and according to redemption!"

### 194. How many kingdoms of God does Holy Scripture mention?

Scripture speaks of three kingdoms of God: that of nature (God reigns over all of creation), that of grace (it begins at the time of the redemption but has its very beginning when God reigned over His people Israel), and that of glory (the heavenly kingdom, which begins after the second coming of Christ).

**195. Explain the interpretation of the Law of God that says that before the Fall Adam and Eve ate only the fruit from the tree of life.**

We do not know whether or not Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of life before the Fall. There is no injunction in Holy Scripture against eating the fruit of the tree of life. Additionally, in eating of the fruit of life they would have received immortality, eternal life, because partaking of the tree of life is partaking of the Creator Himself, of His power. Just as we now commune of the Body and Blood of the Lord under the appearance of bread and wine, so then would a person have received divine strength, the divine light, by eating of the fruit of the tree of life. Strictly speaking, Christ *is* the tree of life for all those who run to Him, as King Solomon says. Regarding this question you may look at St. John Chrysostom's commentary on the book of Genesis, where this question is examined in detail. This question is also discussed in volume six of St. Ephraim the Syrian's collected works.

**196. Explain the meaning of the words "twice have I heard this" in Psalm 62.**

The One Word of God is divided in two. On one hand the Lord is mercy, and on the other He is justice; but it is the manifestation of one and the same Word of God. The love and the justice are indivisible, but depending on to whom it

is applied, one or the other comes to the fore. Those people who persist in wickedness are deserving of punishment, and when the Word of God arrives, it is to their condemnation; while to those who do good and seek salvation God grants His mercy. This is the exact meaning of these words. As it says in another place, "The voice of God is a dividing voice, dividing in two a flame of fire." In other words, God splits in two even a flame of fire: one and the same fire burns and scorches sinners, and enlightens and cleanses the righteous. This is the fire of God's presence by the will of the Holy Spirit.

### 197. Who are enchanters and what is the meaning of the word "prelest"?

Enchanters—from the word "enchantment"—are people who lead one into delusion. Enchantment is the state of being under a spell: when a person, by means of witchcraft, is put under a spell or charmed into becoming infatuated with another person. Therefore, an enchanter is someone who engages in witchcraft, who uses spells to attract one person to another. The phrase "an enchanting person" actually means something that is quite negative. It is just the same with the word "prelest." Incidentally, prelest has once again started to change in meaning, thank God. Prelest means super-deceit: "Pre"—super; "lest"—deceit.

### 198. What was the reason for Saint John Chrysostom's exile? Where and how did he die?

It was decided to remove St. John Chrysostom from the cathedra of Constantinople because of his firm determination to defend Christian truth and his harsh criticism of those close to the emperor. To this end Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, came and conducted an unlawful council, the so-called "Council at the Oak," where St. John was accused of various crimes. Chrysostom did not appear at this council, since he demanded the withdrawal of his blatant enemies. They did not listen to him, and for his failure to appear they deposed him in absentia. Chrysostom did not recognize the council's decision, and he was exiled. On that very same day there was a terrible earthquake in Byzantium. The emperor soon returned him from his exile and appointed him once again to the cathedra of Constantinople. Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria then convened an unlawful council for the second time, and Chrysostom was exiled again to Komany (Abkhazia), where he soon died. It was September 14, 407. He was around 60 years old; he was very sick, and the journey was difficult for him to bear.

### 199. How are we to understand the biblical expression "two-edged sword"?

A two-edged sword is a sword that is inescapable. In the past there were two types of sword used in battle: a backsword (one with a sharp edge and a dull edge) and

a sword sharpened on both sides. The word of God is a two-edged sword: you cannot hide from it; it pierces *even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* **(Heb. 4:12)**, as the apostle Paul says. The word of God pierces the very depths of a person's heart and draws everything to the outside, and a person sees himself in perspective: he sees both the good and the evil that are hidden inside him. He sees that what he often disdained is the only thing of value that he has, and that what he thought to be his greatest achievement is actually something deeply shameful. This is why the word of God is referred to in this particular fashion.

### 200. How are we to understand the Bible verse that says that the sun, moon, and stars sing to the Lord?

*O ye sun and moon, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever. O ye stars of heaven, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever* **(Dan. 3:62-63)**. The planets' orbits are situated in such a way that their movement actually forms music. Johannes Kepler did something very interesting back in the 17th century: he converted the movement of the planets on their orbits to a musical sequence, and it resulted in very beautiful music. The piece was performed on the harpsichord, although it could be played on various instruments. There are now recordings of this piece on the Internet, and anyone who likes can listen to it.

### 201. What is currently located on the site of the once-majestic city of Babylon?

A swamp!—just as it was foretold by God through the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. *And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces* **(Is. 13:19-22)**. There were attempts to rebuild it more than once, but each time was unsuccessful. The last unsuccessful attempt of this sort was made by Saddam Hussein. He even endorsed an entire project dedicated to the restoration of Babylon, which was generously financed by oil money. Saddam Hussein went against the will of God, however. He tried in this manner to change the prophets' prediction, and it did not work out exactly the way he wanted. We should never violate God's commandments and try to go against the prophecies. Saddam Hussein did not understand this, and God explained it to him in layman's terms through the Americans. We have before us a classic example of a modern-day Nebuchadnezzar, who after growing proud sank low and paid for this with his life.

### 202. Why was none of the pagan wise men able to interpret the mysterious writing on the wall for King Belshazzar?

*Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof* **(Dan. 5:8)**. Here we see that all wisdom that is occult, mysterious, and sorcerous is powerless when it comes into contact with the mystery of God, when it comes up against the power of the Omnipotent God. They were unable to explain the meaning because they were unable to read it. And why were they unable to read it? There are different explanations regarding this. Because the text was written in Hebrew, which was different from Syrian. They could not read it because it was written in a special, sacred language that was unknown in Babylon. And most importantly, they could not convey the content because it makes itself known through the hidden mystery of God, which cannot be known by those who serve darkness. The same thing has happened with the Chaldeans, the enchanters, and the fortunetellers: they are unable to read the word of God. They are unable to explain it; it is not within their power.

There are people who study various demonic arts but are unable to read written Russian. When you tell them to read the word of God, they say: "I can't," "I don't feel like it," "the book won't open," "I don't have the time," and sometimes "When I start to read, my head hurts; I'm not going to read." We run into cases like these frequently because when people serve the enemy of mankind, he diverts their eyes,

if you will. They are not capable of seeing the mysteries of God; these mysteries reject them, as it were. They smell the aroma emanating from the word of God, and this smell is deathly for them. *A fragrance from death to death* **(2 Cor. 2:16)**, as the apostle Paul says in the epistle to the Corinthians. And because of this they are unable to pronounce the word of God. Sometimes it happens that ordinary people not involved with magic are unable to understand the word of God after using foul language, quarrelling, fighting, etc., because the enemy is at work, preventing them from understanding the word of God. And sometimes you read the Bible and just do not understand anything.

### 203. If an Orthodox Christian is praying at Liturgy but has not prepared for Communion, may he leave the church at the words "catechumens, depart"?

Of course he can leave. As a matter of fact, in ancient times this was considered normal: if a person was unable to commune for some reason, he left with the catechumens.

### 204. How are we to understand the word "heaven" in Holy Scripture?

Scripture speaks of the existence of three heavens. For us the first heaven is outer space, which surrounds the earth. It was created on the second day. It houses the stars; the birds fly in it; this is the sky that we see. The second heaven is the heaven of the angels. It was created on the first day. It shares

our space to a certain degree, but it is a heaven different from the one we see. The second heaven is a spiritual universe of sorts, in which the spirits live and where the souls of the righteous go after death. And there is a third heaven: the place of God's habitation. Actually, God is Himself His own habitation: He is completely omnipresent and fills all things.

### 205. Why was Prophet Daniel not with the three youths when they were thrown into the furnace?

Daniel was not supposed to be there. Whom did the king summon? The rulers of nations, governors, mayors, and prefects whom he tested for loyalty. Daniel, however, was the ruler of the wise men. In our terms, he was the person in charge of education, science. Therefore, Daniel was not summoned; the king summoned the three youths, who were rulers of the Hebrews.

### 206. Which angel went down into the pit to Prophet Daniel?

Archangel Michael is usually the one depicted descending into the pit, although certain interpretations say that it was actually Christ Himself.

### 207. How do sorcerers die?

In the past there was a rule that when a sorcerer was dying, no one under any circumstances was permitted to

go near him. This was a normal precautionary measure, because a sorcerer cannot die without having first passed on his evil spirit, the lion seeking to crush man; and if he did not succeed in passing it on, then usually the evil spirits would tear him into pieces, like Faust, for instance. Actually, Faust's death was quite different from how it was portrayed in Goethe's novel. He was a real historical character, but he ended quite horribly: he was killed by evil spirits. During his funeral his body was face down the entire time; he kept turning over. I witnessed something interesting recently. There was a little girl whose grandmother was an actual witch. She was in dreadful torment right before her death, but after she gave her antique ring to her granddaughter she died peacefully. After this it was discovered that the girl had all kinds of supernatural abilities; she received a spirit of her own and could not in any way rid herself of it. It tormented her terribly and ruined her life; evil spirits never do anything good for people: they just mess up our lives. In the end, only once the ring was destroyed was she able to live a normal, peaceful life. For the power of God is eternally stronger than the power of the enemy of the human race.

### 208. Why are those who worship the devil always deceived by him?

The devil never measures up to one's hopes; he always repays one in potsherds instead of the promised gold. Why did Faust get a knife in the back instead the wealth prom-

ised him? The reason is that a long time ago, at the dawn of the world's creation, God cursed the serpent and foretold enmity between him and people: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel* **(Gen. 3:15)**. Hence, there will always be this enmity, and the same applies to Eve's descendants who serve the devil; the devil hates them regardless because God appointed this enmity, and the word of God cannot be altered. The devil is bound by the will of the Lord.

### 209. We know that the Jewish people have a protector—Archangel Michael; whom do the Russians have?

The Russian people have a large number of protectors: Prince Vladimir, Saints Sergius of Radonezh, Seraphim of Sarov, and many others. Naturally, the angels are still active as well, but we do not know the name of Russia's guardian angel. It is rightfully and correctly believed that Russia is under the special protection of the Mother of God; in other words, the most pure Mother of God is Russia's guardian angel.

### 210. Do martyrs have to desire death?

They do not thirst for death as such: they thirst for life. This is a huge difference. Why have Christians placed martyrs and those who have committed suicide so far apart?

Those who commit suicide are not buried in a cemetery, it is not allowed to commemorate them in church, and it is seen as a grave sin, while the relics of martyrs are preserved under the altar table. Why this difference? Because one wants life, while the other wants death. They are complete opposites while seeming to be identical. For whom does the martyr long? For Christ, absolute life. One who commits suicide, however, yearns to escape from his sufferings; he thirsts for death as an answer to his problems.

### 211. What is spiritual hearing?

Spiritual hearing is when a person hears the gospel, hears what God wants to tell him. Upon suddenly hearing the word of God a person understands that God is addressing him personally and that this very word is tearing him out of the worldliness and vanity that are eating away at him. The person then starts to listen to the Creator; this right here indicates the beginnings of spiritual hearing. Spiritual hearing of a higher level consists of a person starting to discern in himself good and evil thoughts, rejecting the latter.

### 212. Is the city of Antioch named in honor of the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes?

No. Antioch, the ancient capital of Christianity—now Antakya, a city in the south of modern-day Turkey—was founded by Antiochus Seleucus, the son of Seleucus.

### 213. Why does Fr. Andrei Kuraev speak out as an avid apologist of Harry Potter?

The situation is actually quite simple. Fr. Andrei is a very enthusiastic person, and periodically he goes to extremes, for instance, defending Harry Potter beyond measure. Naturally, it is incorrect to see Harry Potter as evil itself incarnate; but on the other hand, it is perfectly obvious that Harry Potter was created in defense of occultism and magic. However, for the sake of objectivity, Harry Potter is not a Satanist and does not glorify Satanist ideals, even if Joan Rowling is attempting to present magic as something fully acceptable and good. Therefore, it is better in general not to read Harry Potter; but if your children start reading it anyway, there must be serious discussions regarding what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false.

### 214. What is the meaning behind the sin of "insatiable overeating"?

Overeating is a state in which a person constantly eats and is never satisfied. It is usually connected with nervous disorders. When a person is overly nervous, he begins to use food as a means of coping with his anger, irritability, and whatever other passions he has. That is the meaning of insatiable overeating. How do we determine when a person has overeaten? It is not determined by the fact that a person is no longer able to get up from the table. It is very simple: if

a person finds it difficult to pray after eating, it means that he has already overeaten. This is an extremely basic, simple method.

### 215. What is "bestial confusion of thoughts"?

Bestiality is an attribute of thought. During a person's life, all his thoughts are directed toward satisfying the animal aspects of his being, which should be subject to the mind. When the mind is subject to animal impulses such as lust, anger, or thoughts of food, etc., then a person becomes a slave to his passions. This is bestial thought. Naturally, this is a fall, since a person must not serve the animal side of his nature; the latter must serve one's reason, and not vice versa.

### 216. To whom must Christians show charity?

Christians must help everyone in need, and this is how we differ from the Muslims and the Jews. Muslims show charity only to Muslims; Jews, only to Jews; but Christians show charity to everyone. Here is an example: in the middle of the 3rd century there was a terrible plague in Carthage; and how did the pagans distinguish themselves? If someone at home was sick with the plague, he was immediately thrown out into the street, so that no one would become infected. They did not feed him—just threw him out. And the only ones who took care of these people dying in the street

were the Christians. What is more, these were the very Christians whom these same pagans had subjected to cruel torture literally half a year earlier in an effort to force them to renounce Christ. And these Christians cared for these pagans, fed the hungry, buried the dead, died from the plague themselves, but nevertheless continued their work. This is because they were manifesting their gospel-like love; they were emulating the Heavenly Father, Who was good to everyone. Therein lies the virtue of the Christians.

### 217. Why does our Church relate differently to traditional religions (Islam, Buddhism, Judaism) than to non-traditional ones?

The concept of traditional confessions first came about in ancient Rome. There are some hagiographies that are quite extraordinary: that of the holy martyr Antipus, who is mentioned in Revelation, and the life of the holy equal-to-the-apostles Carpus. When St. Carpus was being questioned, the ruler asked him why he had departed from the ancient, traditional religion of his ancestors, which strengthened the kingdom, which had built the moral foundation of society, which was recognized not only by Romans but by foreigners as well, which was very ancient and well-established by the experience of many generations; and in view of all this, why he had departed to this new sect of Christianity. Carpus responded to this question with a very logical answer, saying that we do not revere a thing only because it

is ancient, for wickedness is also ancient but is undeserving of any reverence. People have killed since the time of Cain, but murder was not made honorable because of this. In regard to traditional and non-traditional religions, this is an extremely typical concept that is linked to nationalism. The state is thought to be strengthened by traditional religions, whereas new ones are destructive. This is a pagan concept linked to the imperial cult. In this regard, we in Russia have adopted a completely Roman approach, just like in pagan Rome: we are not interested in which religion is true and which is false; the main thing is whether or not it strengthens the nation. Many have forgotten that the Church exists not in order to serve Russia but in order to lead the people to the kingdom of God.

For the fathers of the Church there was no difference between traditional and non-traditional confessions. Holy Scripture uses only one principle to distinguish religions: one is true, and all the rest are false. There is one path that leads to God. The Lord said: *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me* **(Jn. 14:6)**. There are also a multitude of paths; these were invented by the devil and lead to ruin. The Lord Himself said that *idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death* **(Rev. 21:8)**. The essence and worth of a religion does not consist in whether it is traditional or non-traditional: it consists in whether it is true or false. There is now an attempt being made to describe religion as an institution of society, and I con-

sider such behavior intolerable in the Church. If we do not preach the word of God to the Tatars or Chechens or Jews or Kazakhs simply because they are members of traditional confessions, then we are displaying diabolical inhumanity toward them. This actually results in a dreadful sort of racism: people of Turkic or Caucasian descent are unworthy of salvation because of their language. This is what is known as discrimination—in the most terrible sense of the word.

### 218. Are we permitted to pray with the heterodox?

According to the rules of the church, prayer with the heterodox is forbidden. To begin with, this is the tenth canon of the holy apostles: common prayer with the heterodox is forbidden. Moreover, it would be deceitful, since it is unacceptable to say "Our Father" with a Protestant or a Baptist, whose baptism we do not recognize.

### 219. If I have to eat with Protestants, may I say a prayer and bless the food?

Yes. Say the prayer, bless the food, but do not invite them to pray with you. I remember how one of the leaders of the American Southern Baptists, Duane Gish, came to visit me once. I blessed the food before his arrival, and then later we sat down to eat together.

Common prayer with a person who is nominally Orthodox but is in some kind of sect is forbidden mainly

to show him that he is confessing a false teaching. It is necessary not in order to keep from being defiled but in order to show him the unorthodoxy of his position. However, common meals with the heterodox do not go against the holy gospel. Remember, the apostle Paul says that there is no sin in sharing a meal with a pagan if he invites you, particularly because meals are most convenient for discussing matters of faith.

### 220. If a missionary comes up against a person whose heart is not seeking the truth, is it in any way possible to change him?

We must be witnesses of Christ. Remember, the Lord said: *Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth* **(Acts 1:8)**. Your job is to bear witness to the word of God and to tell people of it. How many times? Two or three. *A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject* **(Tit. 3:10)**. Tell him two or three times, and then leave. Give the man free rein. Without the person's free will it will all come to nothing.

### 221. Where is the line between man's personal efforts and God's mercy in the work of salvation?

First God calls, and then man responds. Our salvation is theanthropic—what is scientifically known as synergy. To be saved, a person must believe, repent, and receive a mysti-

cal birth. From this moment on a person is saved. In order for people to believe, we need evangelizers: *And how shall they preach, except they be sent?* **(Rom. 10:15)**. Frequently God sends a person someone to preach to him or sends him a book that teaches him; or He may send him a "chance" television program; or the person may simply see someone Orthodox and begin to think about the faith. This is the way God calls people. Some people ask the question: how is it that only the Orthodox will be saved? What about the Papuans in New Guinea who have never heard about Orthodoxy? Why should they perish? Or the inhabitants of the islands in the Pacific Ocean? Or the different tribes in the Amazon? The fact is that God saves only those predestined for salvation; however, this predestination does not depend on God but on people. *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate … Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified* **(Rom. 8:29-30)**.

God saves only those predestined, but this predestination is secured by man's choice. How is this choice made? This is the very first point at which one's conversion to Christ begins. Here is how it works: when a person desires to seek for the truth, he is the cause of that desire. A sense of what is true was imbedded in him from the beginning, from his very conception, and he chose to follow this call because Christ is *the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world* **(Jn. 1:9)**. Every person has a desire for truth, but may or may not want to realize this desire. This choice belongs to the person himself, and it takes place in his very

depths, which cannot be measured or defined by anything whatsoever. This is the point where everything begins. And so, if a person makes the choice, if the truth is more important to him than his own self, at that moment God will instantly respond. Moreover, you should note that God is aware of this choice before the person is born, even before the creation of the world, because God is outside time. He purposely arranges things so that when this person appears he will have every opportunity to be saved.

Let us take as an example an Arab in Mecca or in Iraq, who desires to find the truth. For the sake of this Arab or Iraqi God will go and destroy Saudi Arabia or Iraq as a nation. He intentionally arranges a war in order to topple the exterior walls that are hindering this person from finding the truth. I know a certain Orthodox Iranian. At first he became a dissenter; he began to be persecuted, and he had to flee so as not to be shot. God did this because it was necessary that the Iranian find Him, and he did find Him after ten years. The work to convert this Iranian was begun long before he embraced Orthodoxy; but what was the original choice to be made? It was he himself who desired to find the truth. After that point God arranges circumstances in such a way that the person finds the truth. He send him a missionary, gives him books, tears him out of his usual way of life, and shatters his former set of values. God begins to work with him in earnest. The person then accepts the Orthodox faith, repents of his sins, and is saved from the moment of holy baptism. Everyone is saved from the moment of baptism—

but saved in hope, because salvation can be lost if one is not steadfast in truth and virtue. As Nicholas Cabasilas says, it is not enough to be baptized: you must be anointed. Were you anointed? This is not enough: you must drink the mystical Cup. And if you have drunk the mystical Cup, you are already at the peak; you can go no further, because there is nothing greater than Communion. Your task henceforth is to retain what you have received. This is why the apostle says: *Stand fast, and hold the traditions* **(2 Thess. 2:15).**

### 222. How do we keep a new convert who has only just started coming to church from being frightened off by the parish customs and leaving?

Here Fr. Andrei Kuraev is right. As he so fittingly put it, these old ladies and parish customs are God's barrier, separating those who have come for a party from those who are seeking truth. He then adds that if a person is afraid of the old ladies, how much more will he be afraid of the antichrist? This is perfectly true, although it is no excuse for the old ladies to make scenes in church.

### 223. How should missionary work be organized?

Missionary work should involve a three-part system. Missionary work leads to catechesis, i.e., the mandatory 40-day period of preparation for holy baptism or joining the Church. After that there needs to be a canonical baptism,

i.e., one of immersion; but it is best do it during the Liturgy, as his holiness Patriarch Alexey II blessed. The next step is the introduction to church life, which involves building Bible schools for the study of Holy Scripture. This three-part system enables missionary work to be carried out properly.

### 224. What can you say about the method of catechesis developed by Fr. Georgiy Kochetkov?

Fr. Georgiy Kochetkov succeeded in creating a very large organization with divisions throughout Russia, numbering around 15,000 people. I think, however, that catechesis should introduce one to the actual Church, and not into some sort of illusion. We do not need to operate parallel to the Church: we need to strengthen the existing one. Essentially, Fr. Georgiy Kochetkov ended up with a parallel hierarchy, a parallel Church. Fr. Georgiy's catechesis distorts the gospel; it teaches false dogmas. Anyone who has read his catechism for catechumens or the one for catechists will have seen that they contain outrageous teachings. Well, for instance, what does it mean that Eve was created from Adam's rib? According to Fr. Georgiy Kochetkov it means that Adam had sexual relations with a female anthropoid ape and thus made her human. This is blasphemous, foolish drivel. I will not even mention the huge number of errors he has made with respect to theology. It was with good reason that the Theological Commission concerned themselves with him for so long. Also, as

I see it, for the purposes of ordinary, formal catechesis, the year-long system of preparing people is highly overrated. It was no accident that the Church requested a shorter preparatory period. There are canon laws that speak about the period of preparation for baptism; one is the synodal resolution from February 20, 1840, which is still in effect to this day: an adult may only receive holy baptism after forty days of preparation. Only a bishop has the right to shorten this period; and for this to happen there must be a document with his written permission.

### 225. What are some outstanding contemporary missionaries you could name?

These, naturally, would be Fr. Oleg Stenyaev, Fr. Georgiy Maximov, Fr. Oleg Cherepanin from Thailand, Fr. Dionisy Pozdnyaev, Fr. Igor from Kemerovo, Fr. Maxim Urbanovich from the U.S.A., Fr. Ioann from Pakistan, Fr. Daniel Byantoro from Indonesia, and many others.

### 226. In dire situations can a layman baptize someone?

Yes, of course. A layman is allowed to baptize in extreme situations. First you must read the beginning prayers and the Symbol of Faith; then you immerse the one being baptized in the water three times with the words: "The servant of God so-and-so is baptized in the name of the Father.

Amen (you immerse him the first time). And of the Son. Amen (you immerse him a second time). And of the Holy Spirit. Amen" (you immerse him a third time). This is a real baptism: the person is born unto eternity, and after this he does not need to be baptized again; he simply needs to be chrismated. This sacrament is performed by a priest. If immersion is impossible because there is little or no water, or because the person is bed-ridden, then you should pour water over him three times.

### 227. Is it possible for punishment to precede a sin?

Yes, punishment before sin is possible, but as a means of instruction rather than a penance; a penance is more of a consequence. There is a good proverb: "A curst cow has short horns."

### 228. Is Joseph the betrothed a descendant of David?

Joseph was a direct descendant of Solomon, and by law he was a descendant of Elijah; that is, he was a descendant of David by Nathan, the other son. This genealogy is given in the Gospel of Luke. The Virgin Mary is also a descendant of King David. Her father, Joachim, was a direct descendant of King David, and her mother was of the tribe of Levi. The genealogy of the Virgin Mary is clearly outlined in the Gospel of Luke all the way up until the fourth second-to-

last generation. The fact is that she and Joseph were related. According to levirate law, if a man died without having children, his brother would have to marry his wife, and the first child born from that marriage would be given the name of the brother who had died.

### 229. Was Christ really pierced in the heart while on the Cross?

Yes, He was. It was a professionally executed thrust to the right side by a Roman soldier, specifically done so as to pierce the heart. That is why blood and water came from Christ's body after the blow. They were specially taught to do this. Why in the right side? Because in battle the left side is protected by a shield; hence, they would strike the right side.

### 230. After His Resurrection, did Christ resurrect martyrs?

He did, but rarely. More often He would help them not to feel their pain and suffering. Martyrdom involved Christ suffering with them, fighting alongside them. As the Church says: "Christ doeth battle together with the martyrs." This is why, when Stephen was dying, Christ was not sitting but standing, battling alongside Stephen. And this is why it is easier for us to suffer when we suffer for Christ: He assists us.

### 231. Will Christ's wounds heal after the Last Judgment?

No, they will never heal. They will remain as a sign of His eternal love.

### 232. What is the angels' nature—corporeal or incorporeal?

Their nature is immaterial, but there are certain corporeal limitations.

### 233. Was the Inquisition really as cruel as they say it was today?

Actually, the number of not-guilty verdicts delivered by the courts of the Inquisition was extremely high—approximately 85% (a positively undreamed-of number in our courts). Torture, of course, was used, but at the same time the object was not to beat out a confession of guilt; on the contrary, the priority was learning the truth. That they killed children is a lie, pure and simple. In five centuries the Inquisition executed 30 thousand people; all the horrible myths about the vast numbers of the slain (allegedly, nearly half of Europe was wiped out by the Inquisition) and the atrocities committed were implanted by our friends the Masons, as an attack on the Catholic Church. Yes, the Inquisition was very harsh; only, it was not the Inquisition per se but the war on witchcraft.

### 234. Why is it that before their death some martyrs prayed for their tormentors, while some asked God for vengeance?

Martyrs did not always pray for their tormentors, and not because some were good and some were bad, but because the Holy Spirit showed them for whom to pray: which ones might yet repent and which ones would never repent. For instance, if we read the Holy Gospel carefully we will see something very interesting: for whom did Jesus Christ pray when He was being crucified? For which enemies? For the soldiers who were crucifying Him. Was Christ's prayer for the soldiers heard? Yes, it was. Longinus the centurion and a few other Roman soldiers came to believe in Him and were later vouchsafed martyrs' crowns. Thus, sometimes martyrs pray, and sometimes they do not. Another example is the protomartyr Stephen. Was his prayer heard when he prayed for those who were killing him? Yes. Saul, who was watching over the cloaks of those killing Stephen, became the apostle Paul. As a result of Stephen's prayer a life was changed. There have been instances when martyrs, on the contrary, prayed for retribution, and it came to pass. The great-martyr Barbara or the martyrs Perpetua and Saturninus are examples. As they were being led around the Colosseum before being given to the beasts to be torn apart, Saturninus paused opposite the ruler who had condemned them to death and said, "You have condemned us to death in this life, but God will cast you into eternal fire in the life to come."

### 235. Can a person who is not ready for martyrdom decline it?

Yes, one may flee from martyrdom; what is forbidden is the denial of Christ. And vice versa: it is not necessary to put oneself forward. If persecution arises and you are able to flee, then you will be doing a good thing because you will not tempt the Lord and you will be showing mercy to the tormentors. This is because a person who simply blasphemes God and one who kills God's servants are guilty of different degrees of sin and will be punished by God in different ways. Therefore, it is not a sin to flee persecution, but if you are taken you must not deny God.

### 236. Is it possible to be saved without martyrdom?

Yes. And yet, what are we to understand by the word "martyrdom"? The Greek word for martyrdom has been poorly translated into Russian. It actually means "bearing witness," and salvation is impossible without bearing witness to Christ! If you do not bear witness with your mouth and life to the fact that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God, and that God raised Him from the dead, you cannot be saved. If He is the Judge, then you must prepare to meet Him on the Day of Judgment. Bearing witness to God means living in a Christian manner, in accordance with His gospel.

### 237. Is it not a sin to work in a casino?

Of course it is. It is unacceptable for a Christian to work in a casino, just as it would be in a brothel.

### 238. What advice can we give to those who have converted to Orthodoxy from Islam and are badly received in Orthodox circles?

The Church is large: if he meets with sinners in one place, then he will undoubtedly be accepted at the next. The Lord says: *But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come* **(Mt. 10:23).**

### 239. How are we to understand terrorism as being the scourge of God?

It is very simple: people grow fat and heavy and do not need God. After an act of terror people begin to fear the fact that they could die at any moment; they see their vulnerability, and many of them realize—and rightly so—that only God can help them. After the terrorist acts in Moscow, people literally tumbled into God's churches. Pure fear drove them in. And this is a classic example of the scourge of God—some of them stayed in the churches.

**240. Is it true that the Holy Spirit cannot fully appear on earth because He is hindered by the flow of time?**

Of course not. The Holy Spirit is here to the extent to which people are able to receive Him. He is omnipotent and can put an end to time at any moment. The Holy Spirit does not appear openly because He is carrying out mystical work that was planned outside the limits of time, and which is now being realized in world developments. Do you often hear reports in the news about how God's mystery is unfolding? No! And for good reason: because it is a mystery. Just as the satanic mystery—the Masonic conspiracy—is not usually spoken of on television, so is the mystery of God not spoken of, because it is an even greater mystery. The mystery of God uses the satanic conspiracy as one of the instruments for the realization of His will. For God can redirect even evil in order to achieve a good outcome.

**241. During the time of the antichrist, how long will the things attested by Prophet Elijah continue?**

1,260 days or three and a half years.

**242. Does a person fall away from the Church when he commits a sin?**

He weakens his connection with the Church, but he does not fall way altogether. Even anathematization does not completely cast a person out; if that were so, those

people would have to be rebaptized in order to be received back. No sin has the power to wash away the sacrament of baptism.

### 243. Is the antichrist able to repent?

No, he is an apostate; he apostasized from God and became the leader of an opposing power. Let us say, for example, that a person ceases being loyal to the emperor and incites a rebellion. How could he repent? The antichrist will not repent; and we know this from Scripture.

### 244. Will the Orthodox patriarch crown the antichrist king?

This speculation was made by St. Lawrence of Chernigov, but Scripture does not say anything concerning this.

### 245. Can we say that blasphemy against God is the norm today?

In the past it was not necessary to prove to people that Jesus is Christ. It was not necessary to prove that He is from God. Now, however, these things have to be proven. This is all happening because of the constant blasphemy that lately has been flung at the Church and Christ. It has become necessary to prove to people that He was not married to Mary

Magdalene, that He did not avoid the Cross, that He did not have any children. We have to prove that the Gospel was written by evangelists, and not by someone else. This blasphemy is coming primarily from the Jews and Muslims—and it is coming aggressively. These two religious groups blaspheme God more than any other. They say that Christ did not die on the Cross, that He is not God, not the Son of God, did not resurrect, and that He will return to earth in order to get married and destroy all Christians, crosses, and pigs.

### 246. Is it permitted to watch television sometimes?

Yes, but it should not control you. If you find that you cannot live without television or that you go crazy if you miss your favorite sit-com or talk-show, then you must not watch it. The main thing is that it not possess your heart and soul. *All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient* **(1 Cor. 6:12)**, says the apostle Paul. I am allowed to watch everything except killing, debauchery, violence, and a few other things that numb the mind; but if I am enslaved by these things, I cannot watch anything at all.

### 247. What should a believing Christian's attitude be toward the coming of the antichrist?

A believing Christian must fulfill the direct commandment of God to preach the gospel to all nations of the earth, looking to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The

antichrist is but a sign—one of many—that His coming is drawing near. Remember, this is where we place our emphasis: we are awaiting the Lord's coming and the great, final division. One of the instruments of the Lord's coming will be the coming of the antichrist. Today we have turned it all upside-down: we are awaiting the coming of the antichrist instead of Christ.

### 248. What will the antichrist's name be when he appears?

He will call himself Christ, that is, the Messiah. He will call himself Mashayekh, Issa Mussikh, Mahdi, Mantererah. These names are well known to all; they are found in various religions.

### 249. Will it be possible to wash away the seal of the antichrist in the lake of George the Trophy-bearer?

This is self-delusion. The seal of the antichrist will be eternally washed in the lake of fire and brimstone. These sorts of legends are cunning and evil. It is an attempt to deceive people, to implant the evil idea that receiving the seal is nothing to worry about, that one can wash it off later. No, that will not work. This terrible punishment was foretold by the prophet Isaiah: *For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to*

*pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against Me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh* **(Is. 66:22-24)**. Why carcasses? Because they are spiritually dead; they are aware of everything, they see everything, but they are carcasses. This is the fate prepared for sinners. Imagine this terrible thing—to burn forever in fire and brimstone before the angels and before Christ: *And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name* **(Rev. 14:11)**.

### 250. When will the Apocalypse begin?

The Apocalypse began from the moment of the Resurrection. It covers the entire history of the New Testament Church, from the Resurrection of Christ to the end of the world, and even beyond.

### 251. Does Satan know that he will not defeat Christ?

Of course he knows, but he hopes to outwit Him. If he is to be defeated, he wants to take as many people as he can with him to destruction.

### 252. In John the Theologian's Revelation, it says that seven angels have seven wounds. Do they have these wounds on their bodies?

No, they were given cups (phials). The angels were appointed to carry out a punishment. The word "wound"—"yazva"—translated literally is "blow." A wound is just an injury, but here "wound" is used to describe the mark left after a blow. It could be translated "angels with seven blows." Thus, "having seven wounds" means "wielding seven blows." Angels are bodiless by nature. These wounds were foreordained by God's providence.

### 253. What is the best way to combat the Masons' conspiracies?

The most powerful way to combat them—there is really nothing that is more powerful—is to tear away those in delusion, to rescue them from their Babylonian ideology. The Masons exercise control not with the aid of physical strength but with the aid of deception. We could fight the Masons with their own methods, using deception against them, and become just the same as they are. Imagine that you are being poisoned with a deadly gas: you would not fight the gas with more gas! That would not improve matters. When you are attacked with poisonous gas you need to put on a good gas mask. Likewise, when you are being poisoned by false ideology, put on the very best gas mask—knowledge of the word of God; or even better: use it skill-

fully and become an Orthodox missionary; throw yourself into the gas's source and carry out of the epicenter all the people who were deceived!

### 254. What are the three mortal sins for which God destroys nations?

Sorcery, sexual perversion, and legalized murder. However, this is not about the mere existence of these sins in a society but about the legitimization of these sins. A nation cannot be held responsible for things they are fighting. If some country or other is home to bandits, and the citizens are fighting against them, then the nation will not have to answer for the bandits' crimes, since they did not take part in their lawlessness. If a nation is fighting against a certain type of evil, then that evil belongs only to the perpetrators. But when a nation considers evil to be the normal way of life, God destroys it.

### 255. There is an opinion that the time of the Last Judgment will be the Six Psalms.

Yes, there is such an opinion, but it is not divine Revelation; it is a sort of pious reminder. During the Six Psalms we should recall the Last Judgment and imagine that we are at the Last Judgment standing before God. Not one person will escape the Last Judgment except the antichrist and the false prophet, who will be denied the honor of appearing at

the Last Judgment. All others, from beginning to end, will have to face this Judgment. All people will come out of their graves and gather from all the ends of the earth; they will stand before the throne of God and be judged according to their deeds.

### 256. What is the main task of church councils?

The main task of church councils is to cut false doctrine out of the Church. They set guidelines in place, showing how this or that doctrine is to be understood. Almost all of the councils' resolutions involved anathemas.

### 257. What is the principle of irreducible complexity?

There are a vast number of animate and inanimate systems that are unable to appear gradually. One could not imagine skin, for instance, gradually coming into existence; it has to be functional immediately upon its appearance, otherwise it simply will not do its job. The same goes for the circulatory system and many others. This is what we call the principle of irreducible complexity, which is in no way compatible with the theory of evolution.

### 258. Is science necessary?

Science is unimportant in regard to salvation, but for this temporal life it is not a bad thing. There is science that

is useful for our physical life, and which can perhaps be useful for the soul as well.

### 259. How do you feel about L.N. Gumilyov's theory of ethnogenesis?

This theory has one small problem: it maintains that the main force of the passionate impulse in the 13th century fell on Belarus; however, no separate nation arose there, neither then nor in the years to follow; rather, it was the opposite: there was seen a decline and outflow of human resources into Russia and the Ukraine—this in spite of the fact that, according to the theory, the passionate impulse must lead to the growth and renewal of the area in which it occurred.

### 260. Are there any historical works that tell truthfully how God, the angels, and demons have been involved in the history of mankind?

There is not a single work of this sort, even though multitudes of witnessed accounts regarding this can be had from the pagans, Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Modern science ignores all these facts. In the 19th century, when they started trying to adapt church history to meet scientific standards, they naturally discarded our entire faith, since science had proven that there is no God. The only faithful histories we have left are St. Dimitry of Rostov's 12-volume collection of the lives of the saints, and a still more fundamental work covering the first 5,500 years of mankind's history: the Bible.

### 261. When two nations are at war, what happens with their guardian angels?

The angels of God do not interfere because they know that it is happening by God's will; but the guilty party will be punished by God and the angel. If God takes a nation's guardian angel away, the nation perishes. Hence the expression "The soul of the nation is gone." The soul of a nation is none other than its guardian angel.

### 262. In what way does sin impede human reason?

Sin renders a person unable to receive God, meaning that sin impedes man's reason; it darkens it. There is an idea that a passion is a sin that has become a habit; every passion drags human reason onto a sort of path or track; the passion drives the person's mind into a certain stupor, and in this state it is simply unable to experience God's revelations.

### 263. In a normal, unfallen world, would recorded Revelation be necessary?

As St. John Chrysostom says in his first homily on the Gospel of Matthew, we should not really need to have the word of God written down; we are supposed to receive knowledge from God the same way that Noah, Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and the holy apostles received it.

But since our impiety and sins made us unworthy of this gift and unable to receive Revelation, God in His mercy condescended to us and gave us the written Law, so that in this way at least we would not fall away from God.

### 264. How is Roman Catholic practice inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible?

In many obvious ways. For instance, in Scripture it says concerning the Blood of the Lord: *Drink ye all of it* **(Mt. 26:27)**, but from the 12th century on, Rome has rejected communion under both kinds. Following the Second Vatican Council the practice of communing under both kinds has been allowed in the Catholic Church but is not observed everywhere.

### 265. Does love of truth constitute a dislike of oneself?

What happens here is that a person dislikes his own opinions; they are less important to him than absolute truth. *God is truth* **(Jer. 10:10)**.

### 266. Is God the Father mentioned in Revelation?

Yes, He is. He was seen by the apostle John the Theologian, but in such a way that He was impossible to describe: *And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine*

*stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald* **(Rev. 4:3)**. It is impossible to depict God the Father: His appearance is ineffable.

### 267. What size is God?

God is immeasurable because He is omnipresent and fills all things. God is wholly everywhere. Psalm 139 is entirely dedicated to describing these of God's attributes.

### 268. Is there support in the Bible for the veneration of icons?

Yes, there is: chapters 25 and 26 of Exodus, which mention the ark, the curtains, the lamps, the smoke of incense, the worship, and the sprinkling of blood. The Bible does not simply tell us about the veneration of icons; there was even a direct commandment given to venerate them: to make depictions of angels.

### 269. Under what circumstances does God hear people?

He says: *Call unto Me, and I will answer thee* **(Jer. 33:3)**. No matter where someone is, no matter how sinful, he can pray to the Lord, and He will always hear him. This is truly God's mercy. St. Nikodim of the Holy Mountain told the following story. A woman who was a harlot was walk-

ing home after work and saw the son of a widow lying dead in the middle of the road. She felt extremely sorry for the woman. She fell on her knees and began to pray to God, saying, "I am a wretched, loathsome woman. Not for my sake but for the sake of the tears of this mother and widow, bring her son back to life." And he came back to life! This is the God we have. He hears those who repent. There is a famous story about a fornicator who continually committed fornication and would go to the church and ask for forgiveness. One day, after fornicating, he died on his way to the church to ask for forgiveness. The devil began to gloat, saying that the fornicator's soul belonged to him now, since the former had not had time to repent. But God said that he was forgiven: "Since the fornicator was on his way to confess, I forgive him!" Such is the real, living God Whom we know from Scripture.

### 270. What false ideas about God are to be found today among those in the Church?

Many Orthodox think that God is only sweet and kind, that he forgives everyone—we do not really even need to ask for forgiveness. As Voltaire said: "God will forgive us: that is His job." However, when Voltaire was dying he began to feel a little differently. Passers-by took pains to avoid his block because of the blood-curdling screams. Therefore, the idea of God being a sort of power that pours out nothing but warmth is not biblical.

### 271. Can a person be indifferent toward God?

It is impossible to remain indifferent toward the Creator. You are either with Him or against Him. Tertium non datur—no third is given. As the Lord said: *He that is not with Me is against Me* **(Mt. 12:30)**.

### 272. Why is it that man cannot have descended from apes?

Man did not descend from apes, nor could he have, even from a purely physiological point of view. The transitional form between ape and man could not have been able to reproduce because of the sexual organs' difference in structure. Apes and humans have fundamentally different means of reproduction. Likewise, their vestibular systems are configured altogether differently: a man's is configured for walking upright, while an ape's is configured for walking on three paws. This alleged transitional link between ape and human would have had absolutely no capability to walk. The Australopithecus Lucy, well known from high-school textbooks, is a typical ape, as was discovered in the process of studying the vestibular system. And there are many such examples.

### 273. Are paradise and the heavenly kingdom one and same place?

Paradise and the heavenly kingdom are different places. Paradise is the temporary habitation of blessed souls. If the

world is the school for souls, then paradise is the university, and real life begins in the heavenly kingdom after the end of the world. The thief who repented entered paradise that very day: *To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise* **(Lk. 23:33).** In the apostle Paul's epistle it says that the saints *received not the promise* **(Heb. 11:39).** Though the saints went to paradise, they have not yet received their reward.

### 274. Who are Neanderthals?

The Neanderthals are the descendants of Adam and Eve. They have some physical peculiarities: a taller stature and a brain larger in volume (over 2000 $cm^3$). They did not die out: this type of human remains to this day; they live among us, and there are a good many of them. We should disregard the amusing way textbooks have portrayed Neanderthals. These were ordinary people—just stronger, taller, and with more developed jaws and cheek-bones, which speaks to the all-meat diet they followed in the past, the remains of which are found in large quantities in their dwelling sites.

### 275. Did the Theotokos have ancestral sin?

Naturally, but she was cleansed of the consequences of sin by the Holy Spirit, Who descended on her at the time of the Annunciation. And she was fully cleansed of ancestral sin on the day of Pentecost, when she was baptized by the Holy Spirit.

### 276. What does the devil "feed" on?

The devil does not give people strength: he takes away their strength, feeding off people's sins. As the Lord said to the serpent: *Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life* **(Gen. 3:14).**

### 277. Why does the Church see heresy as a mortal sin?

Because a person who confesses a false religious doctrine is being counseled by the demons. As Tertullian said, he chooses between Athens and Jerusalem. Athens is wisdom without God.

### 278. Why is death a blessing for fallen man?

If a person in the flesh was immortal and did evil, he would straightway turn into a veritable demon. This person would not be restrained by anything—either by death or by punishment. The blessing is that evil does not spread, that God sets in place certain restraints specifically to stop the spread of evil, whether that be the death of fallen man, national borders, or something else. Death as in fear of punishment has led many people to repentance, and hence, to salvation.

**279. It is said that there is no authority that is not from God. But if an authority is in opposition to God, is that authority from God as well?**

Yes, every authority is from God. Authorities that oppose God are allowed by Him in order to turn the people from sin. We must obey them insofar as they require us to do good and fight evil.

**280. What does it mean that God determined times for each nation and the boundaries of their habitation?**

God has appointed for all nations their times and the boundaries of their habitations. God has given each nation a definite lifespan; thus, no nation is eternal. God likewise determined the borders for every nation's existence. [He] *hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us* **(Acts 17:26-27).**

**281. Why did God reveal Himself to the pagan, Pharaoh, in the book of Genesis?**

God governs all the rulers of the nations. *The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will* **(Prov. 21:1).** A person appointed to be a king, a ruler—even if he is an impious pagan—is available

to God; through him God rules the nation and the entire world.

### 282. Where in the Bible is the price for Christ's betrayal mentioned?

The price for Christ's betrayal is mentioned in the book of Zechariah: *And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for My price thirty pieces of silver* **(Zech. 11:12)**. This prophecy was written 530 years before Christ's birth. The Jews did not name this price because it was foretold by Zechariah, but because according to the book of Exodus, the price for a slave that had been killed was thirty pieces of silver. At the time of the crucifixion, the exchange rate for one piece of silver was four denarii, and one denarius was the daily wage of an unskilled laborer. Thus, thirty pieces of silver amount to four months' wages. This was enough money to cover the cost of a marriage to a widow but not to a virgin.

### 283. Where did the money from Christ's betrayal go? How was it spent?

Judas returned it, and they were thrown into the church treasury. *And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord* **(Zech. 11:13)**.

### 284. What is the meaning of these words from the book of Zechariah: "break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel"?

*Then I cut asunder Mine other staff, even bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel* **(Zech. 11:14)**. The Lord foretold that the Hebrew people would be divided and that they would come to hate one another. It has long been known that all anti-Semitic jokes were written by the Jews themselves; likewise, the most prominent anti-Semites are Jewish. All this was foretold by the Lord through the prophet Zechariah; furthermore, this prophecy is now being carried out to the letter. Israel is currently divided into two major parties: the Israelites—the secular Jews or Zionists, who do not observe the ritualistic requirements of the law—and the Orthodox Jews. These two branches of Hebrew society hate each other with a passion, and, as they say themselves, if it were not for the Arabs there would long ago have been a civil war between the Israelites and the Orthodox Jews. This conflict was present early on as well, but it was kept in check by the Kahal system. The effects of this enmity are described further on in Zechariah: *And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock!*

*the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened* **(Zech. 11:15-17)**. The shepherd is the antichrist. His coming will be assisted, among other things, by the absence of fellowship and the warring of the Jews.

### 285. In Scripture, why does Jesus call Himself a worm?

*But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people* **(Ps. 22:6)**. St. Gregory of Nyssa says that a worm is bait for a fish, and Christ is bait for the devil. Like a big fish, Satan rushes towards the body of Christ and is caught on the hook of His divinity, crucified in the flesh.

### 286. What does redemption (ransom) mean in the Bible?

Ransom ("lytron" in Greek) has several meanings: payment for a prisoner held hostage, payment to God for one's first-born **(Num. 18:15-16)**, payment for a slave's freedom **(Lev. 19:20; 25:51; Ex. 45:13)**, and the ransom paid to be freed from death **(Ex. 21:30)**. Accordingly, he who pays the ransom is called the redeemer. The redeemer ("Goel" in Hebrew) is he who avenges another's blood, who kills another's murderer, who redeems the prisoner from bondage. Scripture thereby emphasizes that Christ is the Redeemer by all the Old Testament laws: He redeemed us from death, sin, and

the curse—the devil, at the price of His own blood. This is spoken of in all the epistles of the apostles, for instance, I Peter **(1:18-19)**.

### 287. Why are some people upset by the cross of the Lord?

This has been happening from the very beginning. The devil's attacks are directed at the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. The devil implanted the extremely devious idea that the God of the New Testament is only a God of love and could never punish anyone. The result is that everyone will be forgiven and the sacrifice was not necessary. This type of theory was first put forward by a New Testament figure, Simon Magus. Later it was adopted by all Gnostics. Therefore, the Gnostic sects see the crucifixion as a mistake, and to this day, all occultists, esoteric groups, and magicians hold this point of view. This is all happening because the devil is deathly afraid of the crucifixion, and he is not on good terms with the Cross; he is repulsed by it, and accordingly, Satan wants everyone to forget about the Cross. That is why he is trying to drag people into this blasphemy.

### 288. Why were the Old Testament sacrifices necessary?

They were shadows of things to come, shadows of the New Testament sacrifice, and they were to prepare people for the time of correction. *But Christ being come an high*

*priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building* **(Heb. 9:11)**. Christ's sacrifice was the reason for the kingdom of heaven: on Golgotha the heavenly kingdom was born.

### 289. What is the Church's stance on interfaith marriage?

Both God's word and the statutes of the Church unequivocally condemn marriage between Christians and those of other faiths. If we look at Holy Scripture, we see that throughout practically all of sacred history, God warns those faithful to Him against mixing with those who do not do His will. Even when the world was just beginning there was an enormous catastrophe, the Great Flood, that was brought about because *the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years* **(Gen. 6:2-3)**.

### 290. Is conversion to Islam considered a sin?

Conversion to another faith is an extremely serious crime against God if it is not conversion to Orthodox Christianity, which was founded on divine Revelation. The Lord said: *But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also*

*deny before My Father Which is in heaven* **(Mt. 10:33)**. The rejection of Orthodoxy is denial of Christ and His salvation. It is the betrayal of Judas. Beyond the grave eternal fire awaits the apostate.

### 291. What is suggested reading for those who have decided to be baptized?

I would recommend the catechism of St. Philaret of Moscow, St. Nikolai Velimirovich's essay *I Believe*, St. Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catechetical Homilies*, and St. Theophan the Recluse's *The Spiritual Life and How to be Attuned to It* and *The Path to Salvation*. And there is a great deal of other wonderful literature dedicated to the fundamentals of the Orthodox faith.

### 292. How long should one prepare for baptism?

There is no definitive answer to this question. If you are sick or are preparing to take a long trip, especially if the trip is risky (for instance, a business trip to a "hot zone"), or if your job can be life-threatening (the police force, the army), then you should not delay. Read or memorize the Symbol of Faith and, if possible, the Gospel of Mark, and be baptized that very day. But under normal circumstances a 40-day period is optimal. That was how long catechesis was in the ancient Church and here in Russia before the

revolution. During this period it is essential that a person begin to change his life, follow the commandments, and learn the Orthodox prayers. We should not drag out this period before baptism for too long, because no one knows the hour of his death; and is the risk of dying without salvation not terrifying?

### 293. What is the primary goal of Christian life?

We come to the Church, to God, in order to live before Him, walk before Him, love Him, and be chaste. At that point we will become holy, and the goal of Christian life will be realized. After all, this is the only reason that we are baptized, for it is said: *And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy* **(Lev. 20:26)**. Thus commands the Almighty God! Do His holy will and receive from Him life and life in abundance.

### 294. Is a spiritual father necessary, and how is one to be found?

It is very beneficial to find yourself a priest and spiritual father who can help you draw close to Christ (but not under any circumstances draw you toward himself—beware of false spirituality!). You do not need to rush to the first priest you see. Make confession with different priests, pray, and if you come to a heartfelt understanding with someone, then

little by little he can become your spiritual father. Only, first find out whether he lives a pious life, whether he holds to the teachings of the fathers of the Church, and whether or not he is obedient to his bishop. I would also advise you to watch how he performs the divine services. His reverence before God will show you whether he is able to help you draw close to Christ.

## DANIEL SYSOEV INC.

was founded as a USA-based subsidiary of the Rev. Daniel Sysoev Missionary Center Benevolent Fund. The corporation's primary goals are:

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— Distributing books, CDs, DVDs, and church supplies in the US and Canada, in English and in Russian
— Promoting projects to further the mission of Orthodoxy in the world.

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# Questions
# to Priest Daniel Sysoev

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